First in Fiction

Everyb

MAGAZI

anuary

25¢

12
11
1
10
2
9
3
8
4
7
6
5
Held Jr

X X X X X
X X X Y Y Y X
O H
Ann Arbor Mich
Gen
An
Nov
DEC 12 1921

Beginning "THE MYSTERY OF

ASPIRIN

Name "Bayer" on Genuine

BAYER
BAYER

Warning! Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting genuine Aspirin prescribed by physicians for twenty-one years and proved safe by millions. Take Aspirin only as told in the Bayer package for Colds, Headache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Earache, Toothache, Lumbago and for Pain. Handy tin boxes of twelve Bayer Tablets of Aspirin cost few cents. Druggists also sell larger packages. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

FREE 25¢ EYELASH BRUSH WITH EACH PACKAGE
LASHBROW
LASHBROW Makes the person Charmingly Beautiful
DARK

It is the *original and only genuine* preparation for growing and beautifying the eyebrows and lashes — gives womanly beauty its crowning charm. Absolutely pure — will not run — no wetting necessary. Natural, Brown or Dark. Price 50c and $1.00. At your dealer's or direct from

LASHBROW LABORATORIES CO.
3941 Preston Ave. St. Louis, U. S. A.

FREE BOOK
How To Learn Piano

Learn Piano

This Interesting Free Book

shows how you can become a skilled player of piano or organ in your own home, **at one-quarter usual cost.** Dr. Quinn's famous Written Method is endorsed by leading musicians and headsof State Conservatories. Successful 25 years. Play chords **at once** and complete piece in every key, **within 4 lessons.** Scientific yet easy to understand. Fully illustrated. For beginners or teachers, old or young. **All music free.** Diploma granted. Write today for 64-page free book, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."

M. L. QUINN CONSERVATORY, Studio EV-41, 598 Columbia Road, Boston 25, Mass.

Skin Tortured Babies Sleep Mothers Rest After Cuticura

Soap, Ointment, Talcum, 25c. everywhere. For samples address: Cuticura Laboratories, Dept D, Malden, Mass.

Vapo Cresolene Est. 1879

The Vapor Treatment for Coughs and Colds

The time for Vapo-Cresolene is at the **first** indication of a **cold or sore throat,** which are so often the warnings of dangerous complications.

It is simple to use, as you just light the little lamp that vaporizes the Cresolene and place it near the bed at night.

The soothing antiseptic vapor is breathed all night, **making breathing easy,** relieving the cough and easing the sore throat and congested chest.

Cresolene is recommended for **Whooping Cough, Spasmodic Croup, Influenza, Bronchitis, Coughs and Nasal Catarrh.** Its germicidal qualities make it a reliable protection when these diseases are epidemic.

It gives great relief in **Asthma.**

Cresolene has been recommended and used for the past forty-two years. The benefit derived from it is unquestionable.

Sold by Druggists. ***Send for descriptive booklet 12***

Try Cresolene Antiseptic Throat Tablets for the irritated Throat, composed of slippery elm bark, licorice, sugar and Cresolene. They can't harm you. Of your druggist or from us, 10 cents in stamps.

THE VAPO-CRESOLENE CO.
62 Courtlandt St., New York
or Leeming-Miles Bldg., Montreal, Canada

"USED WHILE YOU SLEEP"

An Easy Way to Remove Dandruff

If you want plenty of thick, beautiful, glossy, silky hair, do by all means get rid of dandruff, for it will starve your hair and ruin it if you don't.

The best way to get rid of dandruff is to dissolve it. To do this, just apply a little Liquid Arvon at night before retiring; use enough to moisten the scalp and rub it in gently with the finger tips.

By morning, most, if not all, of your dandruff will be gone, and three or four more applications should completely remove every sign and trace of it.

You will find, too, that all itching of the scalp will stop, and your hair will look and feel a hundred times better. You can get Liquid Arvon at any drug store. A four-ounce bottle is usually all that is needed.

The R. L. Watkins Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

Learn to Dance

I CAN TEACH YOU Fox-Trot, One-Step, Two-Step, Waltz and newest "up-to-the-minute" society dances in a few hours—at home—in private by the wonderful

Peak System of Mail Instruction

REMARKABLE NEW METHOD. Easy—fascinating. **RESULTS GUARANTEED.** No music—no partner needed. Thousands taught successfully. **COMPLETE COURSE ON TRIAL.** Write me *today* for **FREE** Information and Low Surprise Offer.

WILLIAM CHANDLER PEAK, M. B.
Studio 692 4737 Broadway, Chicago, Ill.

Have You a Camera?

Write for free sample of our big magazine, showing how to make better pictures and earn money.

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY, 166 Camera House, Boston 17, Mass.

Everybody's

NUMBER ONE JANUARY, 1922 VOLUME XLVI

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

CONTENTS

The Mystery of Ravensdene Court *A Serial* J. S. FLETCHER 4
A new novel that grips you from the very start
Illustrations by HARRY FISK

The Desert Decides WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON 25
Love and adventure in an odd setting
Illustration by C. D. WELDON

The Day of Atonement SAMPSON R[illegible]HAELSON 44
A dramatic story of filial devotion

Foraker's Folly *A Serial* HAROLD TITUS 56
A young man's love-affairs get him into a perplexing tangle
Illustrations by R. K. RYLAND

That Lovely Bounder WALTER DE LEON 76
You never will guess how this story turns out

The Circle W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM 9
A notable play—one of the best of the present season
Illustrated with photographs

The Bridge *A Complete Novel* MARJORIE L. C. PICKTHALL 9
The story of a great love, and what it had to overcome
Illustrations by HARRY FISK

Test-tube Necromancy STODDARD GOODHUE 144
Science shows a new way to solve murder-mysteries
Illustration by E. J. DINSMORE

New Year's Eve *A Sonnet* THEODOSIA GARRISON 155

Ryan's Decision FRANKLYN BARROWS 156
A bit of sidewalk justice by a not-impartial judge

(Continued on next page)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

JAMES H. GANNON, President SEWELL HAGGARD, Editor C. H. HOLMES, Secy. & Treas.

SPRING AND MACDOUGAL STREETS, NEW YORK CITY

6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, August 16, 1899, at the Post-Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada. Yearly subscription, $2.50 in advance. Single copy, twenty-five cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. No extra postage for Canada.

EVERYBODY'S takes all reasonable precautions for handling manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for their safety.

Copyright, 1921, by The Ridgway Company, in the United States and Great Britain.

Wahr
4-9-1923
g. e.

Sacrifice *A Serial* STEPHEN FRENCH WHITMAN 159
The end of the trail in a quest for happiness
Illustration by E. HOPPER

Everybody's Chimney Corner 179
Where reader, author and editor get together to talk things over

Prose and Worse GRIDLEY ADAMS 181

Everybody's Chestnut Tree 183

Cover Design JOHN HELD, Jr.

Coming in February

Godless Valley

A New Serial

By Honoré Willsie

THE New Englander transplanted in the West—what he has done and what he has failed to do. A tense, bitingly human story of the West, and more—a story based on the vital things that go in to make life, civilization. (See page 180.)

Stop the Press!

A Complete Novel

By Oliver Peck Newman

IT TAKES you into big drama. It introduces you to politicians, bigwigs in general, the newspaper editor and a likable up-to-date girl. Its excuse for being is that it tells an amazingly good story.

And These Short Stories:

"THE BLACK HORSE," by Will Levington Comfort, whose name is sufficient guarantee of a good story; "Dicky's Continuity," by Walter De Leon, who made an enduring name for himself when he wrote "Brooders;" "The Magic Wheel," containing another adventure of Dr. Goodrich, and "Her Family," by Helen Redington, whose story, "The Winning Sister," is so pleasantly remembered.

February *EVERYBODY'S*—out January 14th

Everybody's

NUMBER ONE JANUARY, 1922 VOLUME XLVI

Some New-Year Promises

WE HAVE been asked if we would have more stories by Beldon Duff, author of "Twenty-four Hours."

We shall. We shall have a serial which is just as good as "Twenty-four Hours."

And we shall have a mystery serial, "Swallowed Up," by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, which will cause just as much talk as "Twenty-four Hours."

We shall have a new serial by William Patterson White, author of "The Rider of Golden Bar;"

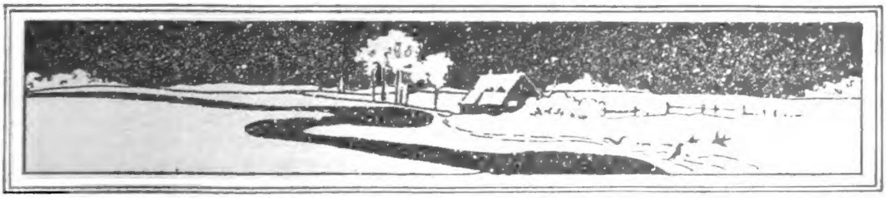
One by Harold Titus, author of "Foraker's Folly;"

One by Francis R. Bellamy, "A Flash of Gold," a dramatic love-story, so vital, so intense that it will be remembered,

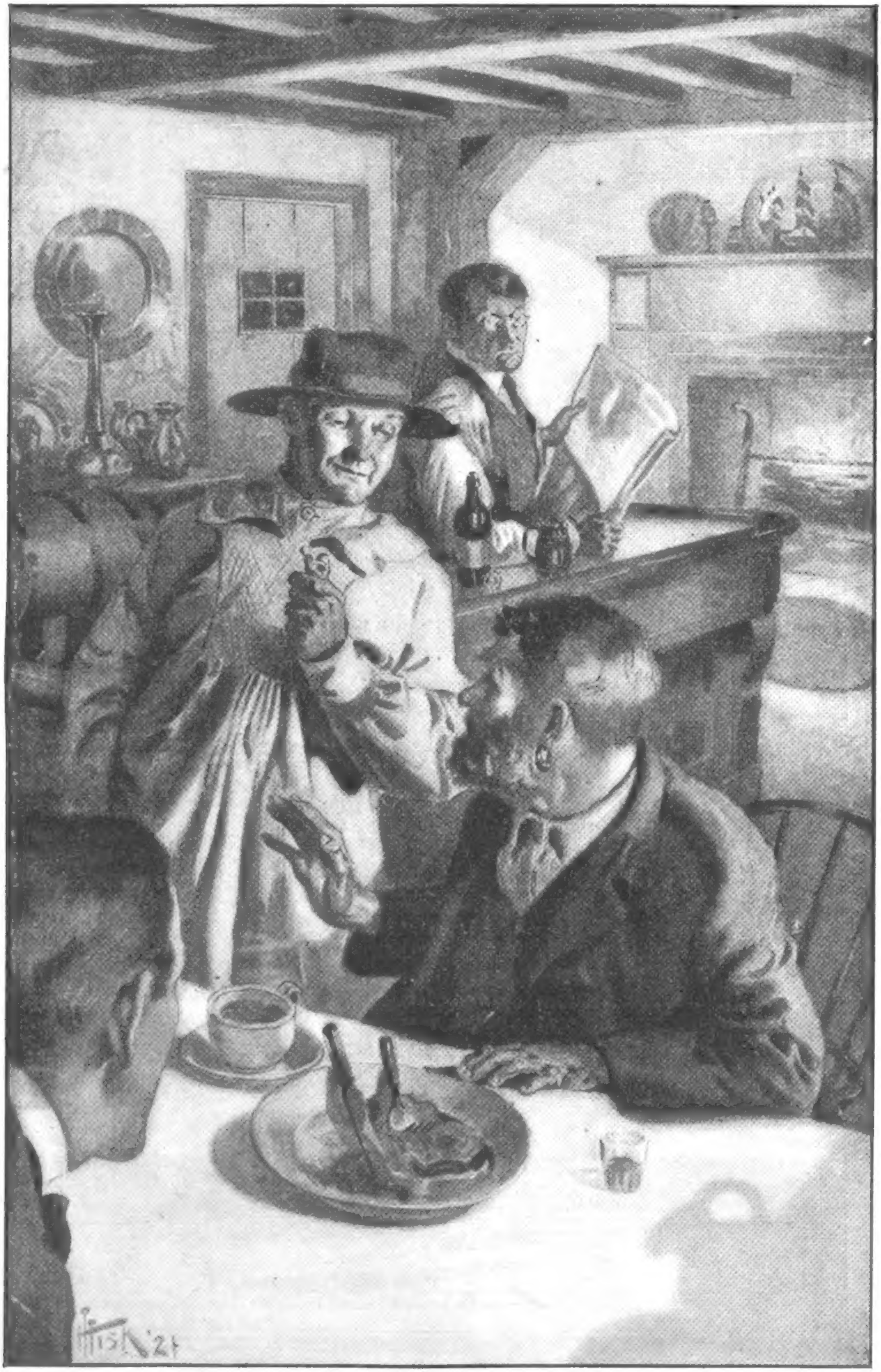
And one by Norman Springer, a sea-story that will make you want to be a boy again.

The adventures of Dr. Goodrich, that likable, amazingly adroit and wonderfully well-informed scientific detective, will be continued.

And we shall have a series of Russian Bolshevik revelations in fiction form, written by a former American military-intelligence officer.



COPYRIGHT, 1921, BY THE RIDGWAY COMPANY



"What's that?" Salter Quick snapped out. "You met a man—hereabouts—asked you if you knew where there was graves with a certain name on 'em? And that name was Netherfield?"

The Mystery *of* Ravensdene Court

You Will Recall Having Started a Story Now and Then Which Kept You Reading All Night Long. This Is That Kind of Story. It Has No Furbelows, but It Grips. You Won't Want to Put It Down.

In Three Parts

By J. S. Fletcher

Illustrations by Harry Fisk

ACCORDING to an entry in my book of engagements, I left London for Ravensdene Court on March 8, 1912. Until about a fortnight earlier I had never heard of the place, but there was nothing remarkable in my ignorance of it, seeing that it stands on a remote part of the Northumbrian coast and at least three hundred miles from my usual haunts. But then, toward the end of February, I received the following letter, which I may as well print in full. It serves as a fitting and an explanatory introduction to a series of adventures so extraordinary, mysterious and fraught with danger that I am still wondering how I, until then a man of peaceful and even dull life, ever came safely through them.

RAVENSDENE COURT, NEAR ALNWICK,
NORTHUMBERLAND.
February 24, 1912.

DEAR SIR:

I am told by my friend Mr. Gervase Witherby, of Monks Welborough, with whom I understand you are well acquainted, that you are one of our leading experts in matters relating to old books, documents and the like, and the very man to inspect, value and generally criticize the contents of an ancient library. Accordingly, I should be very glad to secure your valuable services. I have recently entered into possession of this place, a very old manor-house on the Northumbrian coast, wherein the senior branch of my family has been settled for some four hundred years. There are here many thousands of volumes, the majority of considerable age; there are also large collections of pamphlets, manuscripts and broadsheets. My immediate predecessor, my uncle, John Christopher Raven, was a great collector; but, from what I have seen of his collection up to now, I cannot say that he was a great exponent of the art of order or a devotee of system, for an entire wing on this house is neither more nor less than a museum, into which books, papers, antiques and similar things appear to have been dumped without regard to classification or arrangement. I am not a bookman or an antiquary; my life until recently has been spent in far different fashion, as a financial commissioner in India. I am, however, sincerely anxious that these new possessions of mine should be properly cared for, and I should like an expert to examine everything that is here, and to advise me as to proper arrangement and provision for the future. I should accordingly be greatly obliged to you if you could make it convenient to come here as my guest, give me the benefit of your expert knowledge, and charge me whatever fee seems good to you. I cannot promise you anything very lively in the way of amusement in your hours of relaxation, for this is a lonely place, and my family consists of nothing but myself and my niece, a girl of nineteen, just released from the schoolroom; but you may find some more congenial society in another guest of mine, Septimus Cazalette, the eminent authority on numismatics, who is here for the purpose of examining the vast collection of coins and medals formed by the kinsman I have just referred to. I can also promise you the advantages of a particularly bracing climate, and assure you of a warm welcome and every possible provision for your comfort. In the hope that you will be able to come to me at an early date,

I am, dear sir, yours truly,
FRANCIS RAVEN.

Digitized by Google 421377 Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

As I have said already, I left London on the eighth of March, journeying to Newcastle by the afternoon express from King's Cross. I spent that night at Newcastle, and went forward next morning to Alnmouth, which, according to a map with which I had provided myself, was the nearest station to Ravensdene Court. And soon after arriving at Alnmouth the first chapter of my adventures opened and came about by sheer luck. It was a particularly fine, bright, sharply bracing morning, and as I was under no particular obligation to present myself at Ravensdene Court at any fixed time, I determined to walk thither by way of the coast. The distance, according to my map, was about nine or ten miles.

Accordingly, sending on my luggage by a conveyance, with a message to Mr. Raven that I should arrive during the afternoon, I made through the village of Lesbury toward the sea, and before long came in sight of it—a glorious stretch of blue, smooth that day as an island lake and shining like polished steel in the sun. By noon the sun had grown warm, even summer-like—warm enough, at any rate, to warrant me in sitting down on a ledge of the cliffs while I smoked a pipe of tobacco and stared lazily at the mighty stretch of water across which, once upon a time, the vikings had swarmed from Norway. I must have become absorbed in my meditations—certainly it was with a start of surprise that I suddenly realized that somebody was near me, and looked up to see, standing close by and eying me furtively, a man.

The sound of his voice startled me as he quietly wished me a good morning; also, it brought me out of a reverie and sharpened my wits, and as I replied to him, I took him in from head to foot. A thick-set, middle-aged man, tidily dressed in a blue-serge suit of nautical cut, the sort of thing that they sell, ready-made, in seaports and naval stations. His clothes went with his dark skin and grizzled hair and beard, and with the gold rings which he wore in his ears.

"You know these parts?" I suggested.

"No," he said, with a decisive shake of his head. "I don't, master, and that's a fact. I'm from the south, I am—never been up this way before, and, queerly enough, for I've seen most of the world in my time. But I've a sort of connection with this bit of country—mother's side came from hereabouts. And me having nothing particular to do, I came down here to take a cast round, like."

"Then you're stopping in the neighborhood?" I asked.

"Stopped last night in a little place inland," he answered. "Name of Lesbury—a riverside spot. But that ain't what I want—what I want is a churchyard, or it might be two, or it might be three, where there's gravestones what bears a name. Only, I don't know where that churchyard—or, again, there may be more than one—is, d'ye see?"

"I have a good map, if it's any use to you," I said.

He took the map with a word of thanks, and, after spreading it out, traced places with the end of his thick forefinger.

"Hereabouts we are, at this present, master," he said, "and here and there is, to be sure, villages—mostly inland. And'll have graveyards to 'em—folks must be laid away somewhere. And in one of them graveyards there'll be a name, and if I see that name I'll know where I am, and I can ask further, aiming at to find out if any of that name is still flourishing hereabouts. But till I get that name, I'm clear off my course, so to speak."

"What is the name?" I asked him.

"Name of Netherfield," he answered slowly. "Netherfield. Mother's people—long since. So I've been told. And seen it—in old books what I have, far away in Devonport. That's the name, right enough; only, I don't know where to look for it."

His name, he said, was Salter Quick—of Devonport when on land.

WE WALKED forward, northing our course along the headlands. And rounding a sharp corner we suddenly came in sight of a little settlement that lay half-way down the cliff. There was a bit of a cottage or two, two or three boats drawn up on a strip of yellow sand, a crumbling smithy, and above these things, on a shelf of rock, a low-roofed, long-fronted inn, by the gable of which rose a mast, wherefrom floated a battered flag.

"Do you feel disposed to a glass of ale?" I asked.

"Rum," he replied laconically. "Rum is

my drink, master. Used to that—I ain't used to ale. Cold stuff! Give me something that warms a man."

"It's poor ale that won't warm a man's belly," I said, with a laugh. "But every man to his taste. Come on, then."

He followed in silence down the path to the lonely inn; once, looking back, I saw that he was turning a sharp eye round and about the new stretch of country that had just opened before us. From the inn and its surroundings a winding track, a merely rough cartway, wound off and upward into the land; in the distance I saw the tower of a church. Salter Quick saw it, too, and nodded significantly in its direction.

"That'll be where I'll make next," he observed. "But first—meat and drink. I ate my breakfast before seven this morning, and this walking-about on dry land makes a man hungry."

"Drink you'll get here, no doubt," said I. "But as to meat—doubtful."

His reply to that was to point to the sign above the inn door. He read its announcement aloud, slowly.

" 'The Mariner's Joy. By Hildebrand Claigue. Good Entertainment for Man and Beast,' " he pronounced. " 'Entertainment'—that means eating—meat for men, hay for cattle. Not that there's much sign of either in these parts, I think, master."

WE WALKED into the Mariner's Joy turning into a low-ceilinged, darkish room, neat and clean enough, wherein there was a table, chairs, the model of a ship in a glass case on the mantelpiece, and a small bar, furnished with bottles and glasses, behind which stood a tall, middle-aged man, clean-shaven, spectacled, reading a newspaper. He bade us good-morning, with no sign of surprise at the presence of strangers.

The landlord satisfied our demands and then vanished through a door at the back of his bar. And when he had expressed his wishes for my good health, Salter Quick tasted the rum, smacked his lips over it, and looked about him with evident approval.

"Sort of port that a vessel might put into with security and comfort for a day or two, this, master," he observed. "I reckon I'll put myself up here while I'm looking round—this will do me very well. I can see they ain't short of good grub and sound liquor here. And doubtless there'll be them coming in here night-time as'll know the neighborhood and be able to give a man points as to his bearings."

When the landlord had returned with a well-filled tray, Quick repeated to him the story of his quest for graveyards.

"Churchyards is what I'm looking for," he went on. "Graves in 'em, you understand. And on them graves a name. Name of Netherfield. Now, I ask you, friendly, ha' you ever seen that name in your churchyard?"

"Well, I haven't," answered the landlord. "But our churchyard—Lord bless you, there's scores o' them flat stones in it that's covered with long grass—there might be that name on some of 'em for aught I know; I've never looked 'em over, I'm sure. But——"

Just then there came into the parlor a man who, from his rough dress, appeared to be a cattle-drover or a shepherd. Claigue turned to him with a glance that seemed to indicate him as an authority.

"Here's one as lives by that churchyard," he observed. "Jim, ha' you ever noticed the name of Netherfield on any o' them old gravestones up yonder? This gentleman's asking after it, and I know you mow that churchyard grass time and again."

"Never seen it," answered the newcomer. "But—strange thing!—there was a man come up to me the other night, this side o' Lesbury, and asked that very question—not o' these parts, he wasn't. But——"

He stopped at that. Salter Quick dropped his knife and fork with a clatter, and held up his right hand.

"What's that?" he snapped out. "What says you? Say it again—no; I'll say it for you—to make sure that my ears ain't deceiving me. You met a man—hereabouts—asked you if you knew where there was graves with a certain name on 'em? And that name was Netherfield? Did you say that? I asks you, serious."

The drover, or shepherd, or whatever he was, looked from Quick to me and then to Claigue.

"You've got it all right, mister," he answered. "That's just what I did say. A stranger chap, he was—never seen him in these parts before."

Quick took up his glass and drank. There was no doubt about his being upset, for his big hand trembled.

"When was this here?" he demanded.

"Two nights ago," replied the man readily. "I was coming home, late, from Alnwick, and met with this here chap a bit this side o' Lesbury. We walked a piece of the road together, talking. And he asked me what I've told you. Did I know these parts? Was I a native hereabouts? Did I know any churchyards with the name Netherfield on gravestones? And I said I didn't, and when we came to them crossroads where it goes to Denwick one direction and Boulmer the other, he left me, and I ain't seen aught of him since."

Quick pushed his empty glass across the table, with a sign to Claigue to refill it; at the same time he pointed silently to his informant, signifying that he was to be served at his expense.

"What like was this here man?" he demanded. "Draw him out—plain."

"I couldn't tell you, mister," replied the other. "It was well after dark, and I never saw his face. But, for the build of him, a strong-set man, like yourself, and just about your height. And, now I come to think of it, spoke in your way—not as we do in these quarters. A stranger—like yourself. Seafaring man, I took him for."

"You seem very anxious to find these Netherfield gravestones," the landlord remarked, with good-humored inquisitiveness. "And so, apparently, does another man. Now, I've been in these parts a good many years, and I've never heard of 'em—never even heard the name."

Quick seemed indifferent to these remarks. Plunging a hand in his trousers pocket, he produced a fistful of gold coins.

"What's to pay?" he demanded. "Take it out o' that—all we've had, and do you help yourself to a glass and a cigar." He flung a sovereign on the table and rose to his feet. "I must be stepping along," he continued, looking at me. "If so be as there's another man seeking for——"

But at that he checked himself, remaining silent until Claigue counted out and handed over his change; silently, too, he pocketed it and turned to the door. Claigue stopped him with an arresting word.

"I say!" he said. "No business of mine, to be sure, but—don't you show that money of yours over readily hereabouts—in places like this, I mean. There's folk up and down these roads that 'ud track you for miles on the chance of—eh, Jim?"

"Aye—and farther," assented Jim. "Keep it close, master."

Quick listened quietly—just as quietly he slipped a hand to his hip-pocket, brought it back to the front and showed a revolver.

"That and me, together—eh?" he said significantly. "Bad lookout for anybody that came between us and the light."

We had left the inn when Quick suddenly raised his eyes and gave me a franker look than I had so far had from him.

"Master," he said, in a low voice, and with a side glance at the open door of the inn, "I'll tell you a bit more than I've said before—you're a gentleman, I can see, and such keeps counsel. I've an object—and a particular object—in finding them graves. And now I find another man after what I'm after! Another man!"

"Have you any idea who he may be?" I asked.

He hesitated, and then suddenly shook his head.

"I haven't," he answered. "No; I haven't, and that's a fact. For a minute or two, in there, I thought that maybe I did know, or, at any rate, had a notion, but it's a fact I haven't. All the same, I'm going Denwick way, to see if I can come across whoever it is, or get news of him. Is that your road, master?"

"No," I replied. "I'm going some way farther along the headlands. Well, I hope you'll be successful in your search for the family gravestones."

He nodded very seriously.

"I'm not going out o' this country till I've found 'em," he asserted determinedly. "It's what I've come three hundred miles for. Good-day, master."

He turned off by the track that led over the top of the headlands. And presently I, too, went on my way, and, rounding another corner of the cliff, left the lonely inn behind me.

BUT as I went along, following the line of the headlands, I wondered a good deal about Salter Quick and the conversation at the Mariner's Joy. What was it that this hard-bitten, travel-worn man, one who had seen, evidently, much of wind and wave, was really after? I gave no credence to his story of the family relationship—it was not at all likely that a man would travel all the way from Devonshire to Northumberland to find the graves of his mother's ancestors. There was something beyond that—but what? It was very certain that Quick wanted to come across the tombs of the dead and gone Netherfields, however, for whatever purpose—certain, too, that there was another man who had the same wish. That complicated matters, and it deepened the mystery. And what would happen if, as seemed likely, they met? It was impossible to find an answer to these questions; but the mystery was there, all the same.

The afternoon was drawing to its close when, rounding a bluff that had been in view before me for some time, I came in sight of what I felt sure to be Ravensdene Court, a gray-walled, stone-roofed Tudor mansion that stood at the head of a narrow valley or ravine.

A path that led inland from the edge of the cliffs took me after a few minutes' walking to a rustic gate which was set in the boundary-wall of a small park; within the wall rose a belt of trees, mostly oak and beech, their trunks obscured by a thick undergrowth. Passing through this, I came out on the park itself at a point where, on a well-kept green, a girl, whom I immediately took to be the niece recently released from the schoolroom, of whom Mr. Raven had spoken in his letter, was studying the lie of a golf-ball. Recently released from the schoolroom though she might be, she showed neither embarrassment nor shyness on meeting a stranger. Her hand went out to me with ready frankness.

"Mr. Middlebrook?" she said inquiringly. "Yes, of course—I might have known you'd come along the cliffs. Your luggage came this morning, and we got your message. But you must be tired after all those miles. I'll take you up to the house and give you some tea."

"I'm not at all tired, thank you," I answered. "I came along very leisurely, enjoying the walk."

I had already seen Mr. Francis Raven advancing to meet us; a tall, somewhat stooping man with all the marks of the Anglo-Indian about him—a kindly face burned brown by equatorial suns, old-fashioned, grizzled mustache and whiskers.

"Welcome to Ravensdene Court, Mr. Middlebrook!" he exclaimed, in quick, almost deprecating fashion. "A very dull and out-of-the-way place to which to bring one used to London; but we'll do our best. You've had a convoy across the park, I see," he added, with a glance at his niece. "That's right!"

"As charming a one as her surroundings are delightful, Mr. Raven," I said, assuming an intentionally old-fashioned manner. "If I am treated with the same consideration I have already received, I shall be loath to bring my task to an end."

"Mr. Middlebrook is a bit of a tease, Uncle Francis," said my guide. "I've found that out already. He's not the paper-and-parchment person you expected."

"Oh, dear me, I didn't expect anything of the sort!" protested Mr. Raven. He looked from his niece to me, and laughed, shaking his head. "These modern young ladies—ah!" he exclaimed. "But come—I'll show Mr. Middlebrook his rooms."

I did not waste much time over my toilet, nor, apparently, did Miss Marcia Raven, for I found her, in a smart gown, in the hall when I went down at half-past six. And she and I had taken a look at its multifarious objects before Mr. Raven appeared on the scene, followed by Mr. Cazalette.

MISS RAVEN had already described Mr. Cazalette to me, by inference, as a queer, snuffy, bald-pated old man, but this summary synopsis of his exterior features failed to do justice to a remarkable original. There was something supremely odd about him. I thought, at first, that my impression of oddity might be derived from his clothes—he wore a strangely cut dress coat of blue cloth, with gold buttons, a buff waistcoat and a frilled shirt—but I soon came to the conclusion that he would be queer and uncommon in any garments. About Mr. Cazalette there was an atmosphere—and it was decidedly one of mystery. First and last, he looked uncanny.

Mr. Raven introduced us with a sort of old-world formality, and, in order to keep up to it, I saluted Mr. Cazalette with great respect and expressed myself as feeling highly honored by meeting one so famous as my fellow guest. Somewhat to my surprise, Mr. Cazalette's tightly locked lips relaxed into what was plainly a humorous smile, and he favored me with a knowing look that was almost a wink.

"Aye, well," he said, "you're just about as well known in your own line, Middlebrook, as I am in mine, and between the pair of us I've no doubt we'll be able to reduce chaos into order."

He put his snuff-box and a gaudy handkerchief out of sight, and looked at his host and hostess with another knowing glance.

During dinner I discovered other facts about Mr. Cazalette. He was eighty years old. He was uncannily active. He had an almost implike desire to live—and to dance, when he ought to have been wrapped in blankets and saying his last prayers. And a few minutes later, when we were seated round our host's table, I discovered another fact—Mr. Cazalette was one of those men to whom dinner is the event of the day, and who regard conversation—on their own part, at any rate—as a wicked disturbance of sacred rites. Nevertheless, that he kept his ears wide open to what was being said around him I soon discovered. I was telling Mr. Raven and his niece of my adventure of the afternoon, and suddenly I observed that Mr. Cazalette was peering at me under the shaded lamps, his black, burning eyes full of a strange, absorbed interest. I paused involuntarily.

"Go on!" said he. "Continue with your tale."

I went on with my story, continuing it until the parting with Salter Quick.

"Aye, well," he said, "and that's an interesting story, Middlebrook, and it tempts me to break my rule and talk a bit. It was some churchyard this fellow was seeking?"

"A churchyard—in this neighborhood," I replied. "Or churchyards."

"Where there were graves with the name Netherfield on their stones or slabs or monuments?" he continued. "Aye—just so. And those men he foregathered with at the inn—they'd never heard of anything at that point, nor elsewhere?"

"Neither there nor elsewhere," I assented.

"Then, if there is such a place," said he, "it'll be one of those disused burial-grounds of which there are examples here in the north, and not a few."

"You know of some?" suggested Mr. Raven.

"I've seen such places," answered Mr. Cazalette. "Betwixt here—the seacoast—and the Cheviots westward, there's a good many spots that Goldsmith might have drawn upon for his deserted village. The folks go—the bit of a church falls into ruins—its graveyard gets choked with weeds—the stones are covered with moss and lichen—the monuments fall and are obscured by the grass—underneath the grass and the weed many an old family name lies hidden. And what'll that man be wanting to find any name at all for, I'd like to know!"

"The queer thing to me," observed Mr. Raven, "is that two men should be wanting to find it at the same time."

"That looks as if there were some very good reason why it should be found, doesn't it?" remarked his niece. "Anyway, it all sounds very queer—you've brought mystery with you, Mr. Middlebrook."

When dinner was over, I excused myself from sitting with the two elder men over their wine and joined Miss Raven by the big fireplace in the hall.

"What do you think of that strange old man?" she asked in a low voice as I sat down. "He's so queer. Do you know that he actually goes out early—very early—in the morning and swims in the open sea?"

"Any weather?" I suggested.

"No matter what the weather is," she replied. "He's been here three weeks now, and he has never missed that morning swim."

"A decided character!" I said musingly. "And, somehow, he seems to fit in with his present surroundings. From what I have seen of it, Mr. Raven was quite right in telling me that this house was a museum."

I SLEPT soundly that night—a strange bed and unfamiliar surroundings affect me not at all. Just as suddenly as I had dropped asleep, I woke. My watch lay on the dressing-table close by; glancing at it, I saw that the time was twenty-five minutes to seven. I had been told that the family breakfasted at nine, so I had nearly two and a half hours of leisure. Of course I would go out and enjoy the freshness of the morning. I turned to the window to get a view of the scenery in front of the house. And there, emerging from a wicket gate that opened out of an adjacent plantation, I caught sight of Mr. Cazalette.

It was evident that this robust octogenarian had been taking that morning swim of which Miss Raven had told me the previous evening. He was muffled up in an old pea-jacket; various towels were festooned about his shoulders; his bald head shone in the rising sun. I watched him curiously as he came along the borders of a thick yew hedge at the side of the gardens. Suddenly, at a particular point, he stopped, and drawing something out of his towels, thrust it, at the full length of his arm, into the closely interwoven mass of twig and foliage at his side. Then he moved forward toward the house; a bushy clump of rhododendron hid him from my sight. Two or three minutes later I heard a door close somewhere near my room; Mr. Cazalette had evidently re-entered his own apartment.

I was bathed, shaved and dressed by a quarter past seven, and, finding my way out of the house, went across the garden toward the wicket gate through which I had seen Mr. Cazalette emerge—as he had come from the sea that way, it was, I concluded, the nearest way to it. My path led by the yew hedge which I have just mentioned, and I suddenly saw the place where Mr. Cazalette had stood when he thrust his arm into it; thereabouts the ground was soft, mossy, damp; the marks of his shoes were plain. Out of mere curiosity, I stood where he had stood, and slightly parting the thick, clinging twigs, peeped into the obscurity behind. And there, thrust right in among the yew, I saw something white—a crumpled, crushed-up lump of linen, perhaps a man's full-sized pocket-handkerchief, whereon I could make out, even in that obscurity (and nothing in the way of hedges can be thicker or darker than one of old carefully trimmed yew), brown stains and red stains, as if from contact with soil or clay in one case, with blood in the other.

I went onward, considerably mystified. But most people, chancing upon anything mysterious, try to explain it to their own satisfaction. I came to the conclusion that Mr. Cazalette, during his morning swim—no doubt in very shallow waters—had cut hand or foot against some sharp pebble or bit of rock, and had used his handkerchief as a bandage until the bleeding stopped. Yet—why thrust it away into the yew hedge, close to the house? Why carry it from the shore at all, if he meant to get rid of it? And why not have consigned it to his dirty-linen basket and have had it washed?

"Decidedly an odd character," I mused. "A man of mystery!"

Then I dismissed him from my thoughts, my mind becoming engrossed by the charm of my surroundings. I made my way down to the creek, passed through the belt of pine and fir over which I had seen the sun rise, and came out on a little rock-bound cove, desolate and wild. Here one was shut out from everything but the sea in front; Ravensdene Court was no longer visible. One seemed to be completely alone with sky and strand.

But the place was tenanted. I had not taken twenty paces along the foot of the overhanging cliff before I pulled myself sharply to a halt. There, on the sand before me, his face turned to the sky, his arms helplessly stretched, lay Salter Quick. I knew he was dead in my first horrified glance. And, for the second time that morning, I saw blood—red, vivid, staining the shining particles on the yellow, sunlighted beach.

This was murder—black murder. And my thoughts flew to what Claigue, the landlord, had said, warningly, the previous afternoon, about the foolishness of showing so much gold. Had Salter Quick disregarded that warning, flashed his money about in some other public house, been followed to this out-of-the-way spot and run through the heart for the sake of his fistful of sovereigns? It looked like it. But then that thought fled, and another took its place—the recollection of the blood-stained linen, rag, bandage, or handkerchief, which that queer man, Mr. Cazalette, had pushed into hiding in the yew hedge. Had that—had Cazalette himself—anything to do with this crime?

THE instinctive desire to get an answer to this question made me suddenly stoop down and lay my fingers on the dead man's open palm. I was conscious as I did so of the extraordinary, appealing helplessness of his hands—instead of being clenched in a death agony, as I should have expected, they were stretched wide; they looked nerveless, limp, effortless. But when my fingers came to the nearest one—the right hand—I found that it was stiff, rigid, stone-cold. I knew then that Salter Quick had been dead for several hours, had probably been lying there, murdered, all through the darkness of the night.

There was no sign of any struggle. At that point the sands were unusually firm, and, for the most part, all round and about the body, they remained unbroken. Yet there were footprints, very faint indeed, yet traceable, and I saw at once that they did not extend beyond this spot. There were two distinct marks there; one of boots with nails in the heels—these were certainly made by the dead man—the other indicated a smaller, very slight-soled boot, perhaps a slipper. A yard or so behind the body these marks were mingled.

Carefully, slowly, I traced these footsteps. They were plainly traceable, faint though they were, to the edge of the low cliff, there a gentle slope of some twelve or fifteen feet in height; I traced them up its incline. But from the very edge of the cliff the land was covered by a thick, wirelike turf; you could have run a heavy gun over it without leaving any impression. Yet it was clear that two men had come across it to that point, had then descended the cliff to the sand, walked a few yards along the beach, and then—one had murdered the other.

Standing there, staring around me, I was suddenly startled by the report of a gun close at hand. And then, from a coppice, some thirty yards away, a man emerged, whom I took, from his general appearance, to be Tarver, Mr. Raven's gamekeeper. Unconscious of my presence, he walked forward in my direction, picked up a bird which his shot had brought down, and was thrusting it into a bag that hung at his hip, when I called to him. He looked round sharply, caught sight of me, and came slowly in my direction.

"Are you Mr. Raven's gamekeeper?" I asked, as he got within speaking-distance. "Just so— I am staying with Mr. Raven. And I've just made a terrible discovery. There is a man lying behind the cliff there —dead."

"Dead, sir?" he exclaimed. "What—washed up by the tide, likely."

"No," I said. "He's been murdered. Stabbed to death!"

He let out a short, sibilant breath, looking at me with rapidly dilating eyes.

I told him of meeting Quick at the Mariner's Joy, of the landlord warning him against showing so much money.

"And now," I said, "before we do more, I'd like to know if he's been murdered for the sake of robbery. You're doubtless quicker of hand than I am—just slip your hand into that right-hand pocket of his trousers and see if you feel money there."

He took my meaning on the instant, and bending down, did what I suggested. A smothered exclamation came from him.

"Money?" he said. "His pocket's full o' money!"

"Bring it out," I commanded.

He withdrew his hand, opened it; the palm was full of gold.

"Then it wasn't robbery!" I exclaimed.

I LEFT him standing by the dead man and went hurriedly away to Ravensdene Court. Glancing at my watch as I passed through the belt of pine, I saw that it was already getting on to nine o'clock and breakfast-time. Just then, fifty yards in front of me, I saw Mr. Cazalette vanishing round the corner of the long yew hedge, at the end nearest to the house. So—he had evidently been back to the place where he had hidden the stained linen, whatever it was. Coming up to that place a moment later, and making sure that I was not observed, I looked in among the twigs and foliage. The thing was gone!

Then I caught sight of Mr. Cazalette again. He was on the terrace, in front of the house, with Mr. Raven—they were strolling up and down, before the open window of the morning-room, chatting. And I was thankful that Miss Raven was not with them, and that I saw no sign of her near presence.

I determined to tell my gruesome news straight out—Mr. Raven, I felt sure, was not the man to be startled by tidings of sudden death, and I wanted, of set purpose, to see how his companion would take the announcement. So, as I walked up the steps of the terrace, I loudly called my host's name. He turned, saw from my expression that something of moment had happened, and hurried toward me, Cazalette trotting in his rear.

"I don't want to alarm Miss Raven," I said in a low voice, which I purposely kept as matter of fact as possible. "Something has happened. You know the man I was telling you of last night—Salter Quick? I found his dead body, half an hour ago, on your beach. He has been murdered—

stabbed to the heart. Your gamekeeper, Tarver, is with him. Had you not better send for the police?"

I carefully watched both men as I broke the news. Its effect upon them was different in each case. Mr. Raven started a little, exclaimed a little; he was more wonder-struck than horrified. But Mr. Cazalette's masklike countenance remained immobile; only, a gleam of sudden, almost pleased interest showed itself in his eyes.

"Aye!" he exclaimed. "So you found your man dead and murdered, Middlebrook? Well now, that's the very end that I was thinking the fellow would come to. Not that I fancied it would be so soon, nor so close at hand. On one's own doorstep, so to speak. Interesting! Very interesting!"

I was too much taken aback by his callousness to make any observation on these sentiments; instead, I looked at Mr. Raven.

"Get the police out as quickly as possible," I said, "and bid them bring a doctor."

"They'll bring their own police surgeon," he remarked, "but we have a medical man closer at hand. I'll ring him up, too. Yet—what can they do?"

"Nothing—for him," I replied. "But they may be able to tell us at what hour the thing took place. And that's important."

When we left the telephone we went to the morning-room to get a mouthful of food before going down to the beach. Miss Raven was there; so was Cazalette. I saw at once that he had told her the news. She was sitting behind her tea and coffee things, staring at him; he, on his part, a cup of tea in one hand, a dry biscuit in the other, was marching up and down the room, sipping and munching, and holding forth, in didactic fashion, on crime and detection. Miss Raven gave me a glance as I slipped into a place at her side.

"I didn't want you to know until—later," I said. "Mr. Cazalette oughtn't to have told you."

She arched her eyebrows in the direction of the odd, still orating figure.

"Oh!" she murmured. "He's no reverence for anything—life or death. I believe he's positively enjoying this; he's been talking like that ever since he came in and told me of it."

Mr. Raven and I made a very hurried breakfast and prepared to join Tarver. The news of the murder had spread through the household; we found two or three of the men servants ready to accompany us. And Mr. Cazalette was ready, too, and, I thought, more eager than any of the rest.

WE ALL trooped down to the beach, where Tarver was keeping his unpleasant vigil. He had been taking a look around the immediate scene of the murder, he said, during my absence, thinking that he might find something in the way of a clue. But he had found nothing—there were no signs of any struggle anywhere near. It seemed clear that two men had crossed the land, descended the low cliffs, and that one had fallen on the other as soon as the sands were reached—the footmarks indicated as much. I pointed them out to the police, who examined them carefully and agreed with me that one set was undoubtedly made by the boots of the dead man while the other was caused by the pressure of some light-footed, lightly shod person. And there being nothing else to be seen or done at that place, Salter Quick was lifted on to an improvised stretcher which the servants had brought down from the Court and carried by the way we had come to an outhouse in the gardens, where the police surgeon proceeded to make a more careful examination of his body. He was presently joined in this by the medical man of whom Mr. Raven had spoken—a Doctor Lorrimore, who came hurrying up in his motor-car and at once took a hand in his fellow practitioner's investigations. But there was little to investigate—just as I had thought from the first. Quick had been murdered by a knife-thrust from behind—dealt with evident knowledge of the right place to strike, said the two doctors, for his heart had been transfixed, and death must have been instantaneous.

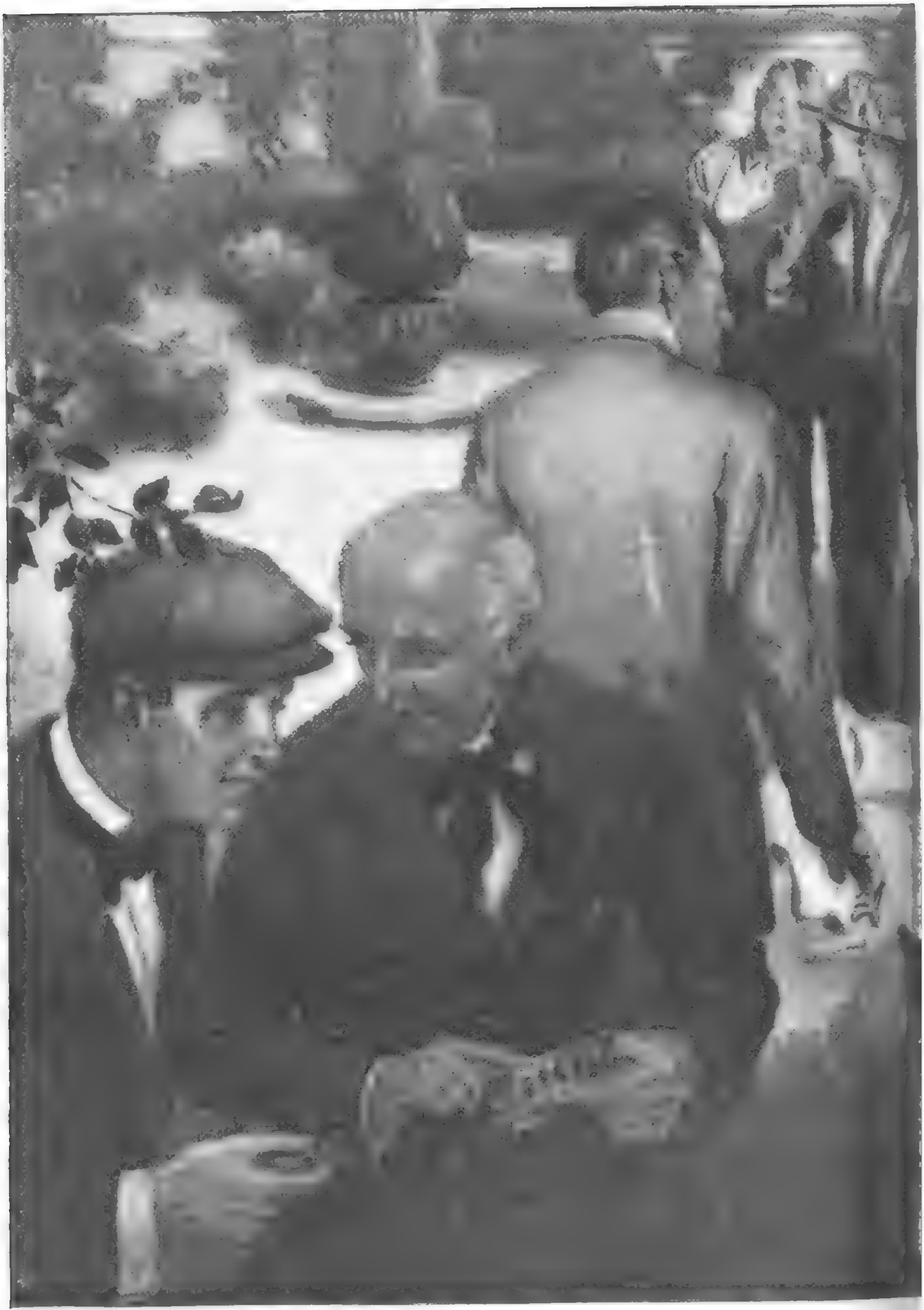
Mr. Raven shrank away from these gruesome details, but Mr. Cazalette showed the keenest interest in them.

"And what sort of a weapon was it, d'ye suppose that the assassin used?" he asked. "That'll be an important thing to know."

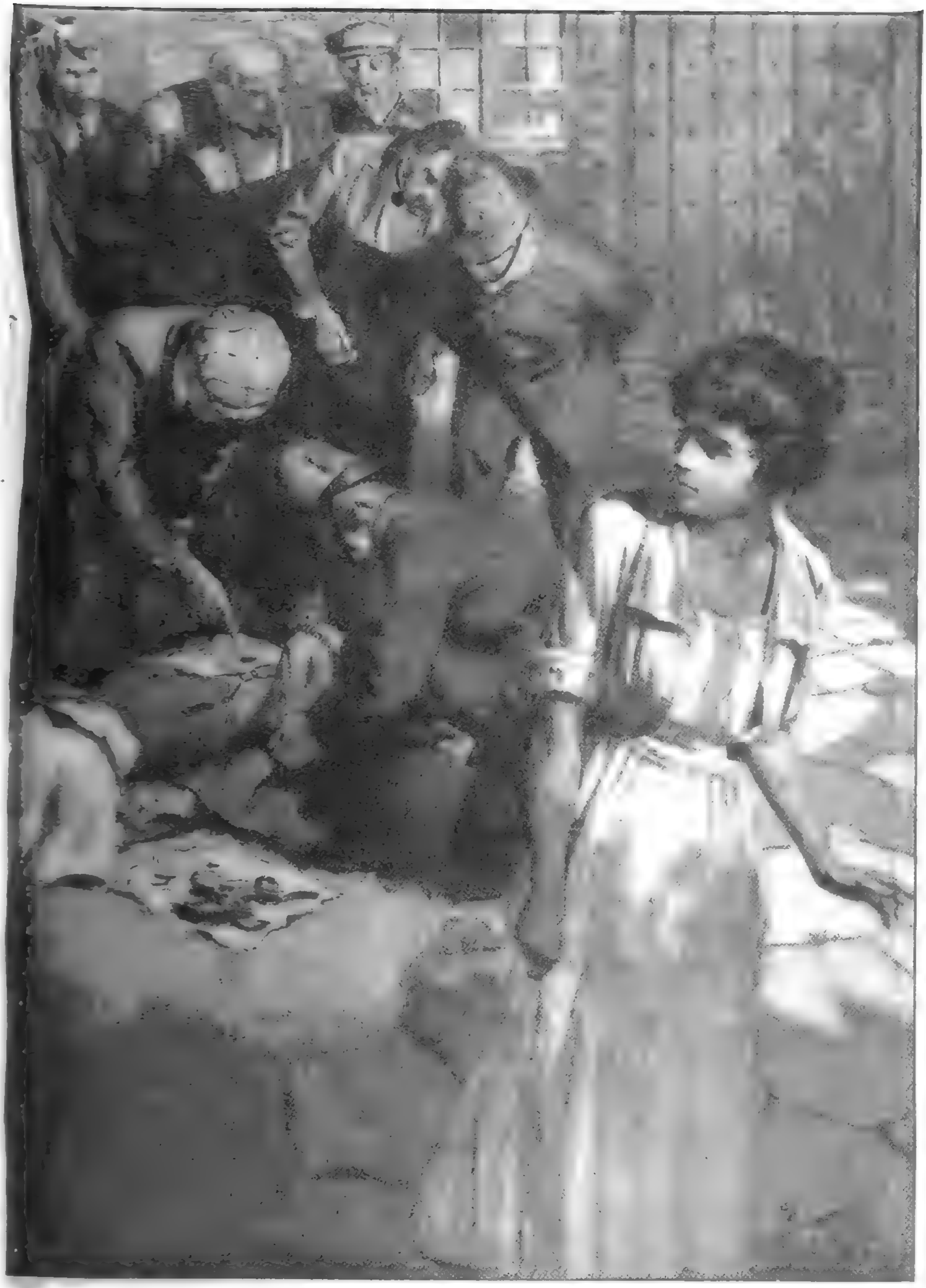
"It might have been a seaman's knife," said the police surgeon. "One of those with a long, sharp blade."

"Or," said Doctor Lorrimore, "a stiletto—such as foreigners carry."

"Aye," remarked Mr. Cazalette; "or



Nothing seemed to excite Cazalette's interest very deeply until he began to finger the tobacco-box.
scratched into it with the point of a nail, or a knife. There's marks



"Middlebrook," he whispered, "d'ye see the inside of the lid of this box? There's been something and there's figures! Now, I'd like to know what all that signifies."

with an operating knife—such as you medicos use. Any one of those fearsome things would serve, no doubt. But we'll be doing more good, Middlebrook, just to know what the police are finding in the man's pockets."

The police inspector had got all Quick's belongings in a little heap. They were considerable. Over thirty pounds in gold and silver. Twenty pounds in notes in an old pocketbook. His watch—certainly a valuble one. A pipe, a silver match-box, a tobacco-box of some metal, quaintly chased and ornamented. Various other small matters—but, with one exception, no papers or letters. The one exception was a slightly torn, dirty envelope addressed in an ill-formed handwriting to Mr. Salter Quick, care of Mr. Noah Quick, The Admiral Parker, Haulaway Street, Devonport. There was no letter inside it, nor was there another scrap of writing anywhere about the dead man's pockets.

The police allowed Mr. Cazalette to inspect these things according to his fancy. It was very clear to me by that time that the old gentleman had some taste for detective work, and I watched him with curiosity while he carefully examined Quick's money, his watch (of which he took particular notice, even going so far as to jot down its number and the name of its maker on his shirt-cuff) and the rest of his belongings. But nothing seemed to excite his interest very deeply until he began to finger the tobacco-box; then, indeed, his eyes suddenly coruscated, and he turned to me almost excitedly.

"Middlebrook," he whispered, edging me away from the others, "do you look here, my lad! D'ye see the inside of the lid of this box? There's been something—a design, a plan, something of that sort, anyway—scratched into it with the point of a nail, or a knife. Look at the lines—and, see, there's marks and there's figures! Now, I'd like to know what all that signifies. What are you going to do with all these things?" he asked, turning suddenly on the inspector. "Take them away?"

"They'll all be carefully sealed up and locked up till the inquest, sir," replied the inspector. "No doubt the dead man's relatives will claim them."

Mr. Cazalette laid down the tobacco-box, left the place, and hurried away in the direction of the house. Within a few minutes he came hurrying back, carrying a camera. He went up to the inspector.

"Ye'll just indulge an old man's fancy?" he said placatingly. "There's some queer markings inside the lid of that bit of a box that the poor man kept his tobacco in. I'd like to take a photograph of them. Man, you don't know that an examination of them mightn't be useful!"

THE police inspector, a somewhat silent, stolid sort of man, looked down from his superior height on Mr. Cazalette's eager face with a half-bored, half-tolerant expression; he had already seen a good deal of the old gentleman's fussiness.

"What is it about the box?" he demanded.

"Certain marks on it—inside the lid—that I'd like to photograph," answered Mr. Cazalette. "They're small and faint, but if I get a good negative of them, I can enlarge it. And I say again, you don't know what one mightn't find out—any little detail is of value in a case of this sort."

The inspector picked up the metal tobacco-box from where it lay amid Quick's belongings and looked inside the lid. It was very plain that he saw nothing there but some—to him—meaningless scratches, and he put the thing into Mr. Cazalette's hands with an air of indifference.

"I see no objection," he said. "Let's have it back when you've done with it. We shall have to exhibit these personal properties before the coroner."

Mr. Cazalette carried his camera and the tobacco-box to the shed by which the dead man's body lay and began to be busy. A gardener's potting-table stood against the wall; on this, backed by a black cloth which he had brought from the house, he set up the box and prepared to photograph it. It was evident that he attached great importance to what he was doing.

"I shall take two or three negatives of this, Middlebrook," he observed consequentially. "I'm an expert in photography, and I've got an enlarging apparatus in my room. Before the day's out, I shall show you something."

Personally, I had seen no more in the inner lid of the tobacco-box than the inspector seemed to have seen—a few lines and scratches, probably caused by thumb or finger-nail—and I left Mr. Cazalette to his self-imposed labors and rejoined the doctors and the police, who were discussing the next thing to be done. That Quick had been murdered there was no doubt; there would have to be an inquest, of course, and for that purpose his body would have to be removed to the nearest inn, a house on the crossroads just beyond Ravensdene Court; search would have to be set up at once for suspicious characters, and Noah Quick, of Devonport, would have to be communicated with.

All this the police took in hand, and I saw that Mr. Raven was heartily relieved when he heard that the dead man would be removed from his premises and that the inquest would not be held there. Ever since I had first broken the news to him, he had been upset and nervous; I could see that he was one of those men who dislike fuss and publicity. He looked at me with a sort of commiseration when the police questioned me closely about my knowledge of Salter Quick's movements on the previous day, and especially about his visit to the Mariner's Joy.

"Yet," said I, finishing my account of that episode, "it is very evident that the man was not murdered for the sake of robbery."

The inspector shook his head.

"I'm not so sure," he remarked. "There's one thing that's certain—the man's clothes had been searched. Look here!"

He turned to Quick's garments, which had been removed, preparatory to laying out the body in decent array for interment, and picked up the waistcoat. Within the right side, made in the lining, there was a pocket, secured by a stout button. That pocket had been turned inside out; so, too, had a pocket in the left hip of the trousers, corresponding to that on the right in which Quick had carried the revolver that he had shown to us at the inn. The waistcoat was a thick, quilted affair—its lining, here and there, had been ripped open by a knife. And the lining of the man's hat had been torn out, too, and thrust roughly into place again. Clearly, whoever killed him had searched for something.

"It wasn't money they were after," observed the inspector, "but there was an object. He'd that on him that his murderer was anxious to get. And the fact that the murderer left all this gold untouched is the worst feature of the affair—from our point of view."

"Why, now?" inquired Mr. Raven.

"Because, sir, it shows that the murderer, whoever he was, had plenty of money on him," replied the inspector grimly. "And as he had, he'd have little difficulty in getting away. Probably he got an early-morning train north or south, and is hundreds of miles off by this time. But we must do our best—and we'll get to work now."

LEAVING everything to the police—obviously with relief and thankfulness—Mr. Raven retired from the scene, inviting the two medical men and the inspector into the house with him, to take, as he phrased it, a little needful refreshment; he sent out a servant to minister to the constables in the same fashion. Leaving him and his guests in the morning-room and refusing Mr. Cazalette's invitation to join him in his photographic enterprise, I turned into the big hall and there found Miss Raven. Mr. Raven soon joined us. With him was the doctor, Lorrimore, whom he had mentioned to me as living near Ravensdene Court. He introduced him to his niece, with, I thought, some signs of pleasure; then to me, remarking that we had already seen each other in different surroundings—now we could foregather in pleasanter ones.

"Doctor Lorrimore," he continued, glancing from me to Miss Raven and then to the doctor, with a smile that was evidently designed to put us all on a friendly footing. "Doctor Lorrimore and I have been having quite a good talk. It turns out that he has spent a long time in India. So we have a lot in common."

"How very nice for you, Uncle Francis!" said Miss Raven. "I know you've been bored to death with having no one you could talk to about curries and brandy pawnees and things—now Doctor Lorrimore will come and chat with you. Were you long in India, Doctor Lorrimore?"

"Twelve years," answered the doctor. "I came home just a year ago."

"To bury yourself in these wilds!" remarked Miss Raven. "Doesn't it seem quite out of the world here—after that?"

Doctor Lorrimer glanced at Mr. Raven and showed a set of white teeth in a meaning smile. He was a tall, good-looking man, dark of eye and hair, mustached and bearded, apparently under forty years of age—yet at each temple there was the faintest trace of silvery gray.

"On the contrary," he said, in a quiet, almost bantering tone, "this seems—quite gay. I was in a part of India where one had to travel long distances to see a white patient—and one doesn't count the rest. And—I bought this practise, knowing it to be one that would not make great demands on my time, so that I could devote myself a good deal to certain scientific pursuits in which I am deeply interested. No—I don't feel out of the world, Miss Raven, I assure you."

Then, excusing himself from Mr. Raven's pressing invitation to stay to lunch, he took himself off.

MR. CAZALETTE made no appearance at lunch, and I did not see him again until late that afternoon, when, as the rest of us were gathered about the tea-table in the hall before a cheery fire, he suddenly appeared, a smile of grim satisfaction on his queer old face. He took his usual cup of tea and dry biscuit and sat down in silence. But by that time I was getting inquisitive.

"Well, Mr. Cazalette," I said, "have you brought your photographic investigations to any successful conclusion?"

He gave us a knowing glance.

"Aye!" he said. "Young folks are full of curiosity. But I'm not going to say what I've discovered, nor how far my investigations have gone."

Mr. Raven tried another tack, fishing for information.

"You really think those marks were made of a purpose, Cazalette?" he suggested.

"I'll no say anything at present," answered Mr. Cazalette. "The experiment is in course of process. But I'll say this, as a student of this sort of thing—yon murder was far from by ordinary."

Miss Raven shuddered a little.

"I hope the man who did it is not hanging about," she said.

Mr. Cazalette shook his head with a knowing gesture.

"Ye need have no fear of that, lassie," he remarked. "The man that did it had put a good many miles between himself and his victim long before Middlebrook, there, made his remarkable discovery."

"Now, how do you know that, Mr. Cazalette?" I asked. "Isn't that guesswork?"

"No," said he. "It's deduction—and common sense. Mine's a nature that's full of both those highly admirable qualities, Middlebrook."

He went away then, as silently as he had come. And when, a few minutes later, I, too, went off to some preliminary work that I had begun in the library, I began to think over the first events of the morning, and to wonder if I ought not to ask Mr. Cazalette for some explanation of the incident of the yew hedge. He had certainly secreted a piece of blood-stained, mud-discolored linen in that hedge for an hour or so. Why?

But on reflection I determined to hold my tongue and bide my time. For anything I knew, Mr. Cazalette might have cut one of his feet on the sharp stones of the beach, used his handkerchief to stanch the wound, thrown it away into the hedge, and then, with a touch of native parsimony, have returned to recover the discarded article. Again, he might be in possession of some clue, to which his tobacco-box investigations were ancillary—altogether, it was best to leave him alone. He was clearly deeply interested in the murder of Salter Quick, and I had gathered from his behavior and remarks that this sort of thing—investigation of crime—had a curious fascination for him. Let him, then, go his way; something, perhaps, might come of it.

As the twilight approached, making my work in the library impossible, and having no wish to go on with it by artificial light, I went out for a walk. Dusk had fallen when I returned, and the house was lighted when I came back. Entering by the big hall, I saw Mr. Raven, Mr. Cazalette and the police inspector standing in close conversation by the hearth. Mr. Raven beckoned me to approach.

"Here's some most extraordinary news from Devonport—where Quick came from," he said. "The inspector wired to the police there this morning, telling them to communicate with his brother, whose name, you know, was found on him. He's had a wire from them this afternoon—read it!"

He turned to the inspector, who placed a telegram in my hand. It ran thus:

> Noah Quick was found murdered at lonely spot on riverside near Saltash at an early hour this morning. So far, no clue whatever to murderer.

I handed the telegram back to the police inspector with a glance that took in the faces of all three men. It was evident that they were thinking the same thought that had flashed into my own mind. The inspector put it into words.

"This," he said, in a low voice, tapping the bit of flimsy paper with his finger, "this throws a light on the affair of this morning. No ordinary crime, that, gentlemen! When two brothers are murdered on the same night, at places hundreds of miles apart, it signifies something out of the common. Somebody has had an interest in getting rid of both men."

"Wasn't this Noah Quick mentioned in some paper you found on Salter Quick?" I asked.

"An envelope," replied the inspector. "We have it, of course. Landlord—so I took it to mean—of the Admiral Parker, Haulaway Street, Devonport."

"It'll be at Devonport that the secret lies," observed Mr. Cazalette suddenly. "Aye—that's where you'll be seeking for news!"

THE coroner held his inquiry the next morning. I remember, however, that nothing was done beyond a merely formal opening of the proceedings, and that a telegram was received from the police at Devonport in which it was stated that they were unable to find out if the two brothers had any near relations—no one there knew of any. Altogether, I think nothing was revealed that day beyond what we knew already, and so far as I remember matters, no light was thrown on either murder for some time. But I was so much interested in the mystery surrounding them that I carefully collected all the newspaper accounts concerning the murder at Saltash and that at Ravensdene Court and pasted the clippings into a book, and from these I can now give something like a detailed account of all that was known of Salter and Noah Quick previous to the tragedies of that spring.

Somewhere about the end of the year 1910, Noah Quick, hailing, evidently, from nowhere in particular, but equally evidently being in possession of plenty of cash, became licensee of a small tavern called the Admiral Parker, in a back street of Devonport. It was a fully licensed house, and much frequented by seamen. Noah Quick was a thick-set, sturdy, middle-aged man, reserved, taciturn, very strict in his attention to business—a steady, sober man, keen on money matters. He was a bachelor, keeping an elderly woman as housekeeper, a couple of stout women servants, a barmaid and a pot-man. His house was particularly well conducted; it was mentioned at the inquest on him that the police had never once had any complaint in reference to it, and that Noah, who had to deal with a rather rough class of customers, was peculiarly adept in keeping order—one witness, indeed, said that, having had opportunities of watching him, he had formed the opinion that Noah, before going into the public-house business, had held some position of authority and was accustomed to obedience. Everything seemed to be going very well with him and the Admiral Parker when, in February, 1912, his brother, Salter Quick, made his appearance in Devonport.

Nobody knew anything about Salter Quick except that he was believed to have come to Devonport from Wapping or Rotherhithe or somewhere about those Thames-side quarters. He was very like his brother in appearance and in character, except that he was more sociable and more talkative. He took up his residence at the Admiral Parker, and he and Noah evidently got on together very well. They were even affectionate in manner toward each other. They were often seen in Devonport and in Plymouth in company, but those who knew them best at this time noted that they never paid visits to, or received visits from, any one coming within the category of friends or relations. And one man, giving evidence at the inquest on Noah Quick, said that he had some recollection that Salter, in a moment of confidence, had once told him that he and Noah were orphans, and hadn't a blood-relation in the world.

According to all that was brought out, matters went quite smoothly and pleasantly at the Admiral Parker until the fifth of March, 1912—three days, it will be observed, before I myself left London for Ravensdene Court. On that date, Salter Quick, who had a banking account at a Plymouth bank (to which he had been introduced by Noah, who also banked there), cashed a check for sixty pounds. That was in the morning. In the early afternoon, he went away, remarking to the barmaid at his brother's inn that he was first going to London and then North. Noah accompanied him to the railway station. As far as any one knew, Salter was not burdened by any luggage, even by a hand-bag.

After he had gone, things went on just as usual at the Admiral Parker. Neither the housekeeper nor the barmaid nor the potman could remember that the place was visited by any suspicious characters, nor that its landlord showed any signs of having any trouble or any extraordinary business matters. Everything was as it should be when, on the evening of the ninth of March (the very day on which I met Salter Quick on the Northumbrian coast), Noah told his housekeeper and barmaid that he had to go over to Saltash, to see a man on business, and should be back about closing-time. He went away about seven o'clock, but he was not back at closing-time. The pot-man sat up for him until midnight; he was not back then. And none of his people at the Admiral Parker heard any more of him until just after breakfast next morning, when the police came and told them that their employer's body had been found at a lonely spot on the bank of the river a little above Saltash.

Like Salter, he had been stabbed, and in similar fashion. And as in Salter's case, robbery of money and valuables had not been the murderer's object. But here again was a point of similarity in the two crimes—Noah Quick's pockets had been turned out; the lining of his waistcoat had been slashed and slit; his thick reefer jacket had been torn off and subjected to a similar search—its lining was cut to pieces, and it and his overcoat were found flung carelessly over the body. Close by lay his hard-felt hat—the lining had been torn out.

There was not the slightest clue in either case. But from all that had transpired it seemed to me that there were certain things to be deduced, and I find that I tabulated them at the time, writing them down at the end of the newspaper clippings, as follows:

1. Salter and Noah Quick were in possession of some secret.

2. They were murdered by men who wished to get possession of it for themselves.

3. The actual murderers were probably two members of a gang.

4. Gang—if a gang—and murderers were at large, and if they had secured possession of the secret, would be sure to make use of it.

OUT of this arose the question: What was the secret? Something, I had no doubt whatever, that related to money. But what, and how? I exercised my speculative faculties a good deal at the time over this matter, and I could not avoid wondering about Mr. Cazalette and the yew-hedge affair. He never mentioned it; I was afraid and nervous about telling him what I had seen. Nor for some time did he mention his tobacco-box labors—indeed, I don't remember that he mentioned them directly at all. But about the time that the inquests on the two murdered men came to an end, I observed that Mr. Cazalette, most of whose time was devoted to his numismatic work, was spending his leisure in turning over whatever books he could come across at Ravensdene Court which related to local history and topography; he was also studying old maps, charts and the like. Also, he got from London the latest ordnance map. Yet he said nothing until one day, coming across me in the library alone, he suddenly plumped me with a question.

"Middlebrook," said he, "the name which that poor man mentioned to you as you talked with him on the cliff was—Netherfield?"

"Netherfield," said I. "That was it."

He helped himself to a pinch of snuff, as if to assist his thoughts.

"Well," said he presently, "and it's a queer thing that at the time of the inquest nobody ever thought of inquiring if there is such a churchyard and such graves."

"Why didn't you suggest it?" I asked.

"I'd rather find it out for myself," said he, with a knowing look. "And if you want to know, I've been trying to do so. But I've looked through every local history there is—and I think the late John Christopher Raven collected every scrap of printed stuff relating to this corner of the country that's ever left a press—and I can't find any reference to such a name."

"Parish registers?" I suggested.

"Aye; I thought of that" he said. "Some of 'em have been printed, and I've consulted those that have without result. And, Middlebrook, I'm more than ever convinced that yon dead man knew what he was talking about, and that there's dead and gone Netherfields lying somewhere in this quarter, and that the secret of his murder is, somehow, to be found in their ancient tombs. Aye!"

He took another big pinch of snuff, and looked at me as if to find out whether or no I agreed with him. Then I let out a question.

"Mr. Cazalette, have you found out anything from your photographic work on that tobacco-box lid?" I asked. "You thought you might."

Much to my astonishment, he turned and shuffled away.

"I'm no through with that matter yet," he answered. "It's—progressing."

I TOLD Miss Raven of this little conversation. We often discussed the mystery of the murders.

"I wish I had seen the tobacco-box," she remarked. "Interesting, anyway."

"That's easy enough," said I. "The police have it—and all the rest of Quick's belongings. If we walked over to the police station, the inspector would willingly show it to you."

"Let us go, then," she said. "This afternoon?"

I had a mind myself to have another look at that tobacco-box; Mr. Cazalette's hints about it and his mysterious secrecy regarding his photographic experiments made me inquisitive. So after lunch that day, Miss Raven and I walked across country to the police station, where we were shown into the presence of the inspector.

"We have come with an object," said I, giving him an informing glance. "Miss Raven, like most ladies, is not devoid of curiosity. She wishes to see that metal tobacco-box which was found on Salter Quick."

The inspector laughed.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "The thing that the old gentleman—what's his name? Mr. Cazalette?—was so keen about photographing. Why, I don't know—I saw nothing but two or three surface-scratches inside the lid. Has he discovered anything?"

"That," I answered, "is only known to Mr. Cazalette himself. He preserves a strict silence on that point. He is very mysterious about the matter. It is his secrecy and his mystery that make Miss Raven inquisitive."

"Well," remarked the inspector indulgently, "it's a curiosity that can very easily be satisfied. I've got all Quick's belongings here—just as they were put together after being exhibited before the coroner." He unlocked a cupboard and pointed to two bundles—one, a large one, was done up in linen; the other, a small one, in a wrapping of canvas. "That," he continued, pointing to the linen-covered package, "contains his clothing; this, his effects—his money, watch and chain and so on. It's sealed, as you see, but we can put fresh seals on after breaking these."

"Very kind of you to take so much trouble," said Miss Raven.

The inspector assured her that it was no trouble, and broke the seals of the small, carefully wrapped package. There, neatly done up, were the dead man's effects, even down to his pipe and pouch. His money was there—notes, gold, silver, copper; there was a stump of lead-pencil and a bit of string; every single thing found upon him had been kept. But the tobacco-box was not there.

The inspector turned to Miss Raven and me with a queer expression.

"That box must have been abstracted at the inquest," he said. "Now then—by whom? And why?"

"The second of your questions might be easily answered," I said. "The thing has been appropriated because somebody believes, as Mr. Cazalette evidently does or did, that there may be a clue in those scratches or marks on the inside of the lid. But as to who it was that believed this and managed to secrete the box—that's a far different matter. You're sure that it was on the table at the inquest?"

"I'm sure of that," he replied, with conviction, "for I distinctly remember laying out the various objects myself. When the inquest was over, I told the man you've just seen to put them all together and to seal the package when he brought it back here. No; that tobacco-box was picked up, stolen, off that table."

"Then there's more in the matter than lies on the surface," said I.

"Evidently," said he. He looked dubiously from Miss Raven to myself. "I suppose the old gentleman—Mr. Cazalette—is to be—trusted? I mean—you don't think that he's found out anything with his photography, and is keeping it dark?"

"Miss Raven and myself," I replied, "know nothing whatever of Mr. Cazalette except that he is a famous authority on coins and medals, a very remarkable person for his age, and Mr. Raven's guest. As to his keeping the result of his investigations dark, I should say that no one could do that sort of thing better."

We then fell into a general discussion of the case.

"And yet," suddenly broke in Miss Raven, "it was not Salter Quick alone who was seeking the graves of the Netherfields. There was another man."

The inspector gave her an appreciative look.

"The most mysterious feature of the whole case!" he exclaimed. "You're right, Miss Raven. There was another man—asking for the same information. If only I could clap a hand on him——"

"You think you'd be clapping a hand on Salter Quick's murderer?" I said sharply.

"I'm not at all sure of that, Mr. Middlebrook," he answered quietly. "Not at all sure. But I think I could get some information out of him that I should be very glad to secure."

MISS RAVEN and I rose to leave; the inspector accompanied us to the station door. And as we were thanking him for his polite attentions, a man came along the street and paused close by us, looking inquiringly at the building from which we had just emerged and at our companion's smart semimilitary uniform. Finally, as we were about to turn away, he touched his cap.

"Begging your pardon," he said; "is this here the police office?"

"You are right, my friend," answered the inspector. "What are you wanting?"

The man looked up the steps at his informant with a glance in which there was a decided sense of humor. Something in the situation seemed to amuse him.

"You'll not know me," he replied. "My name's Beeman—James Beeman. I come fro' near York. I'm t' chap 'at were mentioned by one o' t' witnesses at t' inquest on that strange man 'at were murdered hereabouts—I should ha' called to see you about t' matter before now—only, I've nobbut just come back into this part o' t' country; I been away up i' t' Cheviot Hills there."

"Oh!" said the inspector. "And—what mention was made of you?"

James Beeman showed a fine set of teeth in a grin that seemed to stretch completely across his homely face.

"I'm t' chap 'at were spoken of as asking about t' graves o' t' Netherfield family," he answered. "You know—on t' roadside one night, off a fellow 'at I chanced to meet wi' outside Lesbury. That's who I am."

The inspector turned to Miss Raven and myself with a look which meant more than he could express in words.

"Talk about coincidence," he whispered. "This is the very man we'd just mentioned. Come back to my office and hear what he's got to tell. Follow me," he continued, beckoning the caller. "I'm much obliged to you for coming. Now," he continued, when all four of us were within his room, "what do you know about the graves of the Netherfields?"

Beeman laughed, shaking his round head. Now that his old hat was removed, the fiery hue of his poll was almost alarming in its crudeness of hue.

"Nowt!" he said. "Nowt at all! I'll tell you all about it—that's what I've comed here for, hearing as you were wondering who I was and what had come o' me. I come up here—yes; it were on t' sixth o' March—to see about some sheep stock for our maister, Mr. Dimbleby, and I put up for t' first night at a temp'rance inn at Alnwick yonder. But, of course, temp'rances is all right for sleeping and braikfasting, but nowt for owt else; so when I'd tea'd there I went down t' street for a comfortable public, where I could smoke my pipe and have a glass or two. And while I were there, a man come in 'at, from his description i' t' papers, 'ud be this here fellow that were murdered. I didn't talk none to him, but after a bit I heard him talking to t' landlord. And, after a deal o' talk about fishing hereabouts, I heard him asking t' landlord, as seemed to be a gre't fisherman and knew all t' countryside, if he knew any places, churchyards, where there were Netherfields buried. He talked so much about 'em 'at t' name got right fixed on my mind. T' next day I had business outside Alnwick, at one or two farms, and that night I made farther north, to put up at Embleton.

Now then, as I were walking that way, after dark, I chanced in wi' a man near Lesbury, and walked wi' him a piece, and I asked him, finding he were a native, if he knew owt o' t' Netherfield graves. And that 'ud be t' man 'at tell'd you 'at he'd met such a person. All right—I'm t' person."

"Then you merely asked the question out of curiosity?" suggested the inspector.

"Aye—just 'cause I'd heard t' strange man inquire," assented Beeman. "I just wondered if it were some family o' what they call consequence."

When this candid and direct person had gone, the inspector looked at Miss Raven and me with glances that indicated a good deal.

"That settles one point and seems to establish another," he remarked significantly. "Salter Quick was not murdered by somebody who had come into these parts on the same errand as himself. He was murdered by somebody who was—here already."

Miss Raven and I took our leave for the second time and started walking leisurely back to Ravensdene Court. All that afternoon the weather had been threatening to break—there was thunder about. And now, with startling suddenness, a flash of lightning was followed by a sharp crack, and that on the instant by a heavy downpour of rain. I glanced at Miss Raven's light dress—early spring though it was, the weather had been warm for more than a week, and she had come out in things that would be soaked through in a moment. But just then we were close to an old red-brick house, which stood but a yard or two back from the road, and was divided from it by nothing but a strip of garden. It had a deep doorway, and without ceremony I pushed open the little gate in front and drew Miss Raven within its shelter. We had not stood there many seconds, our back to the door (which I never heard opened), when a soft, mellifluous voice sounded close to my startled ear.

"Will you not step inside and shelter from the storm?"

Twisting round sharply, I found myself staring at the slitlike eyes and old parchment-hued face of a smiling Chinaman.

HAD Miss Raven and I suddenly been caught up out of that little coast village and transported to the Far East on a magic carpet, to be set down in the twinkling of an eye on some Oriental threshold, we could hardly have been more surprised than we were at the sight of that bland, smiling countenance. For the moment I was at a loss to think who and what the man could be; he was in the dress of his own country—a neat, closely fitting, high-buttoned blue jacket; there was a little cap on his head. I was not sufficiently acquainted with Chinese costume to gather any idea of his rank or position from these things—for aught I knew to the contrary, he might be a mandarin who for some extraordinary reason had found his way to this out-of-the-world spot. And my answer to his courteous invitation doubtless sounded confused and awkward.

"Oh, thank you," I said. "Pray don't let us put you to any trouble. If we may just stand under your porch a moment——"

He stood a little aside, waving us politely into the hall behind him.

"Doctor Lorrimore would be very angry with me if I allowed a lady and gentleman to stand in his door and did not invite them into his house," he said. Please to enter."

"Oh, is this Doctor Lorrimore's?" I said. "Thank you—we'll come in. Is Doctor Lorrimore at home?"

"Presently," he answered. "He is in the village."

He closed the door as we entered, passed us with a bow, preceded us along the hall and threw open the door of a room which looked out on a trim garden at the rear of the house. Still smiling and bland, he invited us to be seated, and then with another bow left the room.

Doctor Lorrimore returned within a few minutes.

"So glad you were near enough to turn in here for shelter!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with us warmly. "I see that neither of you expected rain—now, I did, and I went out prepared."

"We made for the first door we saw," said Miss Raven. "But we'd no idea it was yours, Doctor Lorrimore. And do tell me! The Chinese," she continued, in a whisper, "is he your man servant?"

"Man servant!" he said, with a laugh. "He's all the servant I've got. Wing—he's two or three other monosyllabic patronymics, but Wing suffices—is an invaluable person. He's a model cook, valet, launderer, general factotum—there's nothing that he can't and won't do, from making the most perfect curries—I must have Mr. Raven to try them against the achievements of his man—to taking care about the halfpennies when he goes his round of the tradesmen. Oh, he's a treasure—I assure you."

"You brought him from India, I suppose?" said I.

"I brought him from India, yes," he answered. "He'd been with me for some time before I left."

"And does he really like living—here?" asked Miss Raven. "In such absolutely different surroundings?"

"Oh, well, I think he's a pretty good old hand at making the best of the moment," laughed Lorrimore. "He's a philosopher. Deep—inscrutable—in short, he's Chinese. He has his own notions of happiness. At present he's supremely happy in getting you some tea—you mightn't think it, but that saffron-faced Oriental can make an English plum cake that would put the swellest London pastry-cook to shame! You must try it!"

THE Chinaman presently summoned us to tea, which he had laid out in another room—obviously Lorrimore's dining-room. There was nothing Oriental in that; rather, it was eminently Victorian, an affair of heavy furniture, steel engravings, and an array, on the sideboard, of what, I suppose, was old family plate. Wing ushered us and his master in with due ceremony and left us; when the door had closed on him, Lorrimore gave us an arch glance.

"You see how readily and skilfully that chap adapts himself to the needs of the moment," he said. "Now, you mightn't think it, but this is the very first time I have ever been honored with visitors to afternoon tea. Observe how Wing immediately falls in with English taste and custom. Without a word from me, out comes the silver teapot, the best china, the finest linen. He produces his choicest plum cake; the bread and butter is cut with waferlike thinness; and the tea—ah, well, no Englishwoman, Miss Raven, can make tea as a Chinese man servant can."

"It's quite plain that you've got a treasure in your house, Doctor Lorrimore," said Miss Raven. "But, then, the Chinese are very clever, aren't they?"

"Very remarkable people indeed," assented our host. "Shrewd, observant, penetrative. I have often wondered if this man of mine would find any great difficulty in seeing through a brick wall."

"He would be a useful person, perhaps, in solving the present mystery," said I. "The police seem to have got no further."

"Ah, the Quick business!" remarked Lorrimore. "Um—well, I've known a good many murder mysteries in my time—out in India—and I always found that the really good way of getting at the bottom of them was to go right back—as far back as possible. If I were the police in charge of these cases, I should put one question down before me, and do nothing until I'd exhausted every effort to solve it."

"And that would be—what?" I asked.

"This," said he. "What were the antecedents of Noah and Salter Quick?"

"You think they had a past?" suggested Miss Raven.

"Everybody has a past," answered Lorrimore. "It may be this; it may be that. But nearly all the problems of the present have their origin and solution in the past. Find out what and where those two middle-aged men had been, in their time—and then there'll be a chance to work forward."

The rain cleared off soon after we had finished tea, and presently Miss Raven and I took our leave. Lorrimore informed us that Mr. Raven had asked him to dinner on the following evening; he would accordingly see us very soon.

The Chinaman was just then standing at the open door, in waiting on his master. Miss Raven threw him a laughing nod to which he responded with a deep bow. We left them with that curious picture in our minds—Lorrimore, essentially English in spite of his long residence in the East; the Chinaman, bland, suave, smiling.

"A curious pair and a strange combination!" I remarked, as we walked away. "That house, at any rate, has a plentitude of brain-power in it. What amazes me is that a clever chap like Master Wing should be content to bury his talents in a foreign place, out of the world—to make curries and plum cake!"

New situations arise, new characters turn up to deepen the mystery of this very ingenious plot.
See the next instalment, in February EVERYBODY'S—out January 14th.

SAYS the author of this story, "I believe that the chief aim of fiction is to tell a story—not full of froth or pathos or hysteria, but a good, cracking yarn without a smug moral slapping the reader in the face like a cold fish." He has done it in—

The Desert Decides

Love and Adventure in an Odd Setting

By William Ashley Anderson

Illustration by C. D. Weldon

SAGGING in a chair at an iron table in front of the Café de la Paix, a young American by the name of LeRoy Marshall looked out upon the gay swirling currents of life with sardonic bitterness. Into the smooth triumphant order of his career had struck one of those flashes of the human comedy that make little tragedies in the hearts of the lonely players.

Earlier in the day, secure in the conceit of his youth and pride in a conquest which he shared, he had looked out upon the world with disparaging but whimsical humor. He had struck his blow; and it was his right to enjoy and criticize the play. In the morning he had met his compatriot, Mr. Gompers, upon the boulevard and discoursed banteringly with him, in his most flippant American style, upon the labor troubles of the world—although he had often enough broken his back over a pick while being kicked in the chest with high explosive for a remuneration of twenty sous a day and bread and wine.

Later, he had confided, in purest French, to an astounded young royalist from Gascony that he completely shared that young visionary's views, forgetting for the moment that he had just escaped with his life in a struggle to maintain democracy. He had even found the delightful opportunity to inform one of the experts of the Crillon, in studied broken English, that he did not know what the devil he was talking about. Having dispelled the ennui of his loneliness with these insolent vagaries, he had then turned into the Rue Royale and begun to ascend toward the Madeleine, vastly pleased with himself, and finding in the clear, crisp air of that December day an inspiring antidote to the disappointment that had met him upon his arrival in Paris two nights before. Mlle. Aminta Rocher had written him she could no longer stand Paris without him, and had returned to her home near Tours.

All at once, as he was thinking of this demure sweetheart, he raised his eyes and actually saw her stepping into a taxi-cab with an air that indicated Paris was agreeing with her only too well, while at her elbow floundered a heavy-shouldered American army officer. Whereupon, young Marshall suddenly felt very sick. A vertigo swam in his head. A moment later the cab vanished in the direction of the Place de la Concorde. Marshall turned slowly and dazedly on his heel and floated in vermilion-shot clouds of darkness as far as the Café de la Paix and fell into a seat.

A waiter brought him a liqueur in a coffee-cup. Three giggling grisettes took notice of him, but respected his pallid complexion and the painful tenseness of his countenance. One in passing touched him lightly on the shoulder, murmuring: "*Merci bien, poilu! Merci!*"

For he was in the uniform of a French infantryman and had secured his release but three days since. He winced at the touch of the woman's hand, and a curse choked in his throat. His faith had been killed. He had rushed straight to Paris through the litter and filth of the front. The first paroxysm of joy at the declaration of the armistice had passed. Those who had suffered looked relieved of anxiety but very weary, while the newcomers were boisterously gay. Marshall had gone straight to his apartment and found it empty. A note was handed him with a deprecatory gesture by the old *concierge*. He had turned then to the boulevards for diversion, and found despair.

It must be admitted here that the desperate cynicism which young Marshall now experienced was not exactly a new emotion to him. Young though he was, the turbulence of four years of war had given him his ups and downs. He had been wounded in heart and in body more than once, and had recovered from both conditions with the buoyancy of a student whose spirit rises the higher he ascends Montmartre and sinks the nearer he approaches Notre Dame. In his present experience, however, there were concomitant circumstances that gave a poignancy to his suffering until it seemed almost unbearable.

In the first place, the grand tragedy of the war had come to its close with an untimely crash. He had said farewell forever to his comrade, Raymond Delagrange. He had lost his sweetheart, Aminta Rocher. He faced the world penniless and dejected. As he gazed at the torrent of shuffling feet that moved before his downcast eyes, he sank deeper and deeper in his dejection, until he began to consider offering his services in Poland or the Crimea or wherever else they might prove acceptable. The world about him had grown insipid. With an oath, he thrust the table from him, and rose unsteadily to his feet just as another *poilu* rushed forward and seized him by the shoulders. It was Raymond Delagrange!

Marshall's spirits leaped with a bound. He dragged his old comrade to a seat beside him. In a moment they were laughing and clapping each other on the knees, and forgetting everything else in the unexpected delight of meeting.

Delagrange declared that he had come to Paris expressly to hunt up his old friend. An opportunity had presented itself through the good graces of an uncle who held a post in the colonial administration. A knowledge of Arabic was necessary. They had both acquired a smattering of this from Algerian troops with whom they had fraternized. He therefore proposed that they accept together positions with the government in French Somaliland.

Marshall struck the table with his palm and cried out:

"Ah, good Lord! That is the very thing! We shall be colonials!"

This prompt and unthinking acquiescence to a romantic suggestion was perfectly characteristic. At once Marshall saw in the appointment many sprightly adventures, and pictured himself, in advance, again returning to France, sinewy from an active life, tanned by exposure to wind and sun, cynical with his new knowledge of the world, yet wrapped in a glamour that brought the fair ones of earth to him. It almost seemed that he wished to go only for the sake of the return, for beyond such idle yet stimulating dreams he cared nothing for the future. Eager, impassioned, casually appropriating the opportunities that came his way to play with or abandon, believing the world but a toy and life a game, his youthful philosophy was that of one who had never lost.

HE ACCEPTED Raymond's proposition, therefore, as he had always accepted his favors and peculiar loyal friendship—indifferent to the difficulties and sacrifices it may have cost. Raymond, for his part, accepted this situation with a sort of grateful happiness that he could not have explained, had he ever thought to analyze it.

To Delagrange, all true emotions were pure and precious; to Marshall, they were merely the sensations of a moment—feverish, overwhelming, but in an instant forgotten. Their preparations for departure were, therefore, radically different.

Marshall made his farewell to Paris in a round of gaiety—all his immediate resources were heedlessly squandered on amusement and the gratification of joyous impulses. His farewells were none the less ardent because of their diffusiveness. The final farewell of all was perhaps the tenderest, because it seemed to mark the culmination of his passing delights. When he kissed his last love, he kissed Paris. The memory of Aminta lingered to Marseilles; the memory of France remained to torture him.

Raymond went to Tours for a few days with his parents, who were natives of that city. They were quiet, peaceful days, enriched by the sincere affection of his family and relatives, and punctuated by a few simple parties and dinners, where the jollity of the chattering guests was varied by solemn expressions of real regret at the son's departure and earnest wishes for his success. Among the guests at these little domestic functions his cousin Marian was the one who meant most to him. All his hopes were built on her. Although not betrothed, there was a secret understanding between them—an understanding that was ratified at the time of parting by a swift, unintended flame of romantic passion that in an instant made clear all their mutual love and lighted the dim future with a blaze of faith and hope.

AS THEY ascended the gangway of the Messageries Maritimes liner at Marseilles, Marshall, leading, flashed comprehensive glances about the ship, formed swift conclusions and, finally satisfied with this brief inspection, permitted his gaze to rest upon the figure of a young woman who preceded them.

She was blond, plump, firm and full of animation. Though she had the independent assurance of a traveler, she seemed to possess, too, all the naive graces of a woman accustomed to attention and compliments. As she progressed toward the deck, and Marshall heard her little exclamations of delight or contempt, observed her expressive shrugs and gesticulations, admired with appreciation the dainty costume she wore, he determined to make her acquaintance.

While these thoughts were passing through his head and stirring his heart, Raymond, on the other hand, was calmly scrutinizing the vessel that was to bear them away. The strange black faces, the smell of oil and oakum, the banging of iron implements on the deck and the rattle of winches excited his fancy, while the bales of unknown merchandise, with the stirring marks of distant ports—Liverpool, Boston, New York—handled by swarthy stevedores, suggested rich trading.

These were not idle dreams. His plans were definite and well calculated. When he had completed the brief term of his service, it was his intention, with the experience thus gained, to launch conservatively on larger enterprises of a commercial nature, his knowledge of this subject having been based on a brief experience in his father's business— For an instant his mind wandered and he missed his step.

He plunged head foremost into Marshall's back. Marshall, in turn, lost his balance and fell against the girl. She staggered and gave a sharp cry, darting an angry glance at the two young men.

The American, quickly recovering, was swift and earnest in his apologies, so that the girl finally smiled, shrugged her shoulders, expressed a platitude and turned away with a lively impression in her mind.

"You clumsy cuckoo!" said Marshall under his breath. "Is this your method of introduction?"

"*Pardon,*" said Raymond, without much concern; "but the gangway is rocking."

"No doubt! But, my good old chap, did you see her face?"

Raymond gave a short laugh, looking after the girl with clear, straight gaze. Marshall seized him by the arm.

"Listen; I tell you that woman is going to bring an influence into my life."

"LeRoy, my friend, all women bring an influence into your life."

"Ah, you are laughing? Very well! But may I ask——"

"And Aminta?" interposed Raymond; for they had thoroughly exchanged confidences.

"Aminta! Aminta? See; you do not understand. My God, you are not capable of understanding the difference between what is true, what is real, what is genuine. You do not understand me at all! This woman, I assure you, is a star that rises——

"Perhaps," interrupted Raymond, with a touch of irony, "to mark *my* destiny!"

Nevertheless, Marshall set about immediately to establish an acquaintance. But this was not so easy, for the young lady was traveling as the ward of the captain, who seemed indisposed to pick her acquaintances except from among the few distinguished passengers on the list. However, a dignified bow in the morning, an expression of concern, a flashing smile of mutual understanding at some incident that had caught their common gaze, and—behold!—the thing was done.

Marshall had a manner that drew friends to him. His wit, though youthful, was audacious. He was free-handed in an unconsciously selfish manner—that is to say, like many others who have won popularity, he scattered his present riches without concern, relying upon his friends to extricate him in case of difficulty. In the mixed company of a French liner, therefore, he was a complete success.

In the evening he strolled about deck, smoking a cigar in the company of congenial companions, but as often as possible seeking the company of Mademoiselle Lafarge. Here, however, if he were expecting a conquest, he found himself seriously checked. Advances were met with disconcertingly cool gazes; his ardent undertones were turned by a bit of amused sarcasm. Politely flouted, courteously played with, Marshall began to lose the artificial poise of his Parisian experience and felt his passion grow in intensity. He was enraged at his own weakness; but this rage added nothing to his persuasiveness, and he was seen perpetrating gasconades at which Henriette merely shrugged her shoulders and smiled abstractedly.

She was a rare woman, vivacious, but with a vivacity covering a profound reserve that seemed impenetrable. At times she scintillated; presently she brooded. She seemed unconsciously to possess the power of playing with men with the naive freedom of a child whose confidence has been won, then lapsing into petulant silences. It was understood that she was the niece of a high official in Madagascar, but was intending to stop over with relatives in Djibouti, the port of French Somaliland.

Raymond, who kept bashfully aside, nevertheless sometimes studied her furtively, astonished at the freedom she exercised in her manner without the slightest loss of poise. A realization of her beauty, however, stole imperceptibly upon him; though in feeding his eyes he kept alive the memory of Marian.

Marian lacked Mademoiselle Lafarge's temperament, certainly; but Raymond held this to his *fiancée's* credit, her simplicity, her gentleness, her trustfulness being among the features of her character that had appealed most to him. In other respects, there was a sufficient similarity between the two to kindle Raymond's interest in the strange young woman. They both had the firm, graceful amplitude of figure that indicates youth and health and grace when enlivened by brimming spirits. Mademoiselle Lafarge's neck, a column of alabaster loveliness, melting into firm, rounded shoulders and swelling bust in curves and shadows of pure beguiling beauty, supported a head of rare charm. The pale-brown hair was glossy and seemed possessed of life, dancing and curling and quivering at every turn or toss of the head, while the spirited eyes seemed to reflect every *nuance* of light or shade. The curving lips and rounded chin betrayed a nature susceptible to powerful emotions; but the delicacy of the nose and ears suggested refinement of taste; while the peculiar mystifying play of expression in the eyes set beneath the low, broad forehead gave a tantalizing impression of great intuitive understanding, of penetration into hidden thoughts, of sardonic laughter, of a ravishing tenderness, of a perverse devil, wilful, ambitious, mad, craving the unknown, the unattainable, the bizarre.

IN RESPECT to the eyes, Raymond saw no resemblance to Marian. Marian's eyes were blue and candid. Nevertheless, he could not help observing Mademoiselle Lafarge with interest and appreciation. Occasionally he caught a swift, comprehensive glance from her that sent a light, pleasant thrill through him. For Henriette, on her part, had also observed Raymond, and with even greater interest.

Quiet, reserved, he sat apart, reading, conversing with the more experienced travelers of the coast, or practising Arabic and Amharic phrases on the crew.

In that crew, almost all the races from Alex to Cape Delgado were represented, mingling with more or less freedom among the sailors from Marseilles and Bordeaux. Tarbooshes of almost every shape and color decorated bald or kinky heads. Tall, graceful Somalis, clean and handsome of feature, but treacherous in nature, stalked insolently about. Squat negroes from the equatorial countries made themselves useful under abuse or got in every one's way, capering and singing songs; while a few felt-hatted Abyssinians, holding aloof from the blacks, conversed in perfect French with the sailors.

These Abyssinians particularly attracted Raymond. He had long conversations with them, learned much of their wonderful country discussing its commercial possibilities, and found here a chance for putting into action his future plans.

Henriette used to observe him conversing with these men, and found that this calm, collected youth, sharing in talk easily and confidently with Africans, was a different person from what she had at first supposed. His bashfulness was gone. Forgetting the timidity inspired by a frivolous company accustomed to light repartee, he gave indications of a profound and generous nature whose depths apparently had never been guessed by his American friend. Henriette found herself growing more and more interested in him.

Strange thoughts entered her head, which gave place gradually to a romantic curiosity, and that, suddenly, to a glowing, uncontrollable emotion that grew rapidly in intensity. She spoke of Raymond to his companion with an air of flippancy.

"Ah, well," observed Marshall one day, in answer to a jesting comment, "have you not discovered that my poor Raymond is somewhat of a fossil? He knows nothing of gallantry. Deep emotions never disturb him. His soul is tranquil—indifferent to anything but practical facts."

"Are you so sure?" said Henriette, narrowing her eyes.

"Dynamite could not stir him."

"No?"

Marshall gave the thought a moment's consideration.

"Well, even fossils may surprise one, you know."

"I assure you, my very young friend," said Henriette, with unexpected heat, "there is more to M'sieu Raymond than you have ever supposed. He is one to admire. He is indeed worthy of great things."

The American looked at her in astonishment, momentarily shaken by her vehemence. A new and radically different idea of his old friend crept into his mind. As he turned his eyes toward Raymond, who was reclining on a bench, reading, he felt a certain disturbing suspicion. At that moment Raymond raised his eyes, caught the expression on their faces, flushed slightly, and resumed his book with an air of self-consciousness.

As Henriette said nothing, but stood without moving, Marshall then stole a glance at her. Her brown eyes, fastened on Raymond, were soft and brooding. All at once Marshall felt in his breast a sense of suffocation, and the sinking sun seemed to scorch his eyes——

THAT evening, when Marshall came on deck, he looked about quickly, and immediately discovered Raymond and Henriette together in the shadow of the steering-cage aft, talking freely and earnestly, with every appearance of a confidential understanding. Marshall was convinced that in Henriette's voice there was a new and significant tone.

No longer was there the gay, independent note of raillery. Her voice was subdued, earnest, doubtful. Smoldering with rage, Marshall leaned sullenly on the rail and stared gloomily across the shadowy waters. As he stood there, with dark and chaotic thoughts filling his mind, he felt savagely alone. His memory recalled in a sort of kaleidoscopic array the faces of his many acquaintances of other days. Which of them all remembered him? What friend was true? Who in all this world gave him more than a passing thought?

Unknown to Marshall, there was at least one in whose mind at that moment he occupied a very prominent place. For Monsieur Blois, seated alone at a near-by table, shuffling and reshuffling a pack of cards, had his eyes riveted on his back with an expression of peculiar intensity. It seemed almost as though he were endeavoring by sheer force of will to turn the young man's attention to him and drag him to his table.

Presently, in fact, as though drawn unwillingly from his angry mood, Marshall turned from the rail and raised his eyes to catch Blois's gaze resting upon him with an expression which instantly became mild and bashfully inviting. A sense of amusement all at once filled the American. He lounged over and, casually greeting Blois, suggested piquet.

Now, there is a certain democracy on shipboard, fostered, no doubt, by continued propinquity. The privileges of the sea are equal and the penalties it inflicts are paid with obvious humility by all. Rank is leveled; snobbery becomes more than usually ridiculous; good nature alone seems the criterion by which all are judged. It was not strange, then, that Marshall, a virile type of American, should suggest piquet to Monsieur Blois with a complete disregard of the differences in their rank and fortune; for Blois was, in fact, a great prince of commerce enjoying special government subsidies in the development of new country. Heedless of all this, Marshall was inclined to treat him with even less consideration than was his due, criticizing his play and bantering him into livelier practise.

BLOIS, on the other hand, was a slow, shrewd player, and the American, who preferred action regardless of results, often grew irritable. On this occasion, his irritation was marked. He carried it to such a point that the apparently tranquil Blois was at last stirred to resentment at the young man's flippancy.

"Well, my boy," he said, with a calmness that would have been suspicious to a more experienced opponent, "you do not play with the right attitude. If there is a prize at stake, no matter how trivial it may seem, if you respect the prize, you should play the game with caution—though without mercy. There is no faith in man and no reliance in friendship. You should play only to win, considering nothing but the prize."

"What a wicked spirit!" observed Marshall, with a mocking smile. Nevertheless, he felt impelled to look quickly in the direction of Raymond and Henriette. They were turning toward him. In Henriette's countenance, flushed and glowing, there was an expression of sullen distraction, while Raymond's, in the uncertain light, seemed pale and drawn with repression. To Marshall, this seemed terribly significant. Hot with anger, he gave a low exclamation of disgust, which Blois did not quite catch, but, nevertheless, chose to take to himself.

"You should be more regardful," he protested, looking severely through his steel-rimmed glasses. "A game, you know, is, after all, a parody of life. If you treat the game carelessly, we know that you regard life with equal carelessness——"

"Life! You twist the terms, sir. Life is the game. If you take it seriously, then you can enjoy little. Live and enjoy life, and heed nothing else. That is *my* philosophy—and it is as good as yours!"

"It is the philosophy of a boy. It stands no test."

Marshall laughed scornfully.

"It is the philosophy, nevertheless, of men who are always ready to take a chance or to fling a defiance."

"Ah, ah!" said Blois, smiling. "The pretty words!"

"They speak for actions. With what do you dare defy me?"

"*Peste, M'sieu Tartarin!* We might find a defiance to please you." Blois laughed disparagingly. The sudden, sharp dialogue had attracted attention.

Raymond and Henriette strolled uncertainly toward the table.

As they approached, Marshall was leaning across the board, his large eyes flashing with excitement, his little mustache seeming to quiver with the intensity of his emotions, while Blois seemed to be ruminating. All at once he showed animation.

"Very well. We shall test the theory with the cards. Against each month's salary that you earn, I will place the equivalent of a year's salary——"

"Sir!" exclaimed the American.

"It is not odds I am offering," said Blois quickly. "Your year's salary might not perhaps equal my income for a week. I simply wish to make the conditions more nearly just. The odds are really in my favor——"

"LeRoy," interrupted Raymond, advancing as he realized the meaning of the stake, "consider what you are doing!"

"Mother of God!" cried Marshall, flashing an angry look at Raymond. "Am I to have both mentors and tormentors? Permit me, if you please, to play my game alone."

"But you do not play alone," said Raymond stubbornly.

"Play, sir," said Marshall impatiently to Blois. "I accept the wager."

Raymond frowned slightly, then shrugged his shoulders and turned to Henriette, who was looking from one man to another with growing perplexity.

It was clear she understood men, yet the cold, calculating intelligence, unaffected apparently by any material considerations, masked by Blois's impassive countenance, persistently escaped her analysis.

His character intrigued her. Solemn as an owl, merciless as a shark, she was yet convinced that his soul was shaken with sardonic mirth. Through the captain, who regarded the great Blois with all the awe that his great distinction merited, she had formed a remarkable impression of him, knowing him to be a man of tremendous physical vitality, accepting with careless adaptability the luxuries of civilization or the destructive hardships of African wildernesses, while his uncanny intelligence seemed to penetrate every secret of human nature. His steel-rimmed glasses gave age and a certain air of reflective simplicity to a countenance that still preserved a degree of youthfulness and expressive charm. His head was the head of Julius Cæsar (with glasses!), the head of a gentle pedagogue, the head of a pirate, predatory, ruthless, and brimming with repressed and terrible mirth. Henriette Lafarge often wondered if it were possible to bring flaming to his eyes the fire of uncalculated passion. How overwhelming that flame would have to be to consume his will! The thought of this both attracted and repelled her. As she looked at him, she was fascinated. Yet she trembled——

The game went on.

SOMETIMES winning, sometimes losing, the American saw himself at one moment a comparatively wealthy man, at the next a debtor. The constant vicissitudes began to shake him. As he raked in three years' salary in successive plays, he visualized with the cards still in his hands what those three minutes' work would represent of Parisian delights. He might not even be obliged to land at Djibouti, but might return immediately to France. The excitement almost unnerved him.

Blois showed the same countenance as when the game began. Presently, Marshall found himself in debt again. He blundered. He mixed his cards—overlooked excellent chances—thought back nervously on the errors he had made—repeated them—played feverishly. All at once, with a fluttering sensation in his chest, he realized that he had reached his limit. He had gambled away the results of a year's labor!

He must now work for half the term of his contract before he would even begin to earn money. He was bound physically and mentally for a full year!

"Well," he said, with an affected laugh, "you have won; but what have you proved? The spirit to gamble is not killed by a loss. Life is the same. Where, then, is your analogy?"

"Yet it is there," said Blois, considering, and his steadfast eyes looked full at Henriette.

"You have my year to dispose of, LeRoy," said Raymond suddenly. Henriette pressed his arm convulsively. Blois, throwing his head back with a look of amazement, remarked ironically,

"So you, too, are a gambler?"

"Not at all," responded Raymond; "only that M'sieu Marshall and I are friends. We share our chances always—in all things."

No one for an instant seemed to comprehend. Blois was baffled.

"*Tiens!*" exclaimed Marshall, flashing a friendly smile at Raymond. "That is so. Very well, old boy. Thanks! Now, M'sieu Blois, I will show you how to win a fortune for two!"

He not only failed, but left them both in debt.

With assumed carelessness, he looked at the scattered cards, raised his eyes to meet Blois's steady, maddening gaze, affected to laugh.

Raymond, however, seemed quite calm, though his loss was the greater.

The game evidently over, he walked casually away to the rail and looked out into the shadows, seeing there a vision of Marian choking with grief, her eyes raised brimming to his, then lowered, while she clasped and unclasped her hands. Returning once more to the table, he was in time to hear Blois state:

"Here, then, is a more sensible way to test the analogy. It affords you full compensation, and calls only for a test of character——"

"What is this?" inquired Raymond.

"M'sieu Blois has offered a new wager," explained Marshall, with a touch of humility and doubt. "It is simply this: He will wager our losses against a two years' contract to represent him at Vidi-vidi and

Mamsoul. Do not ask me where those places are. They are somewhere on the coast. M'sieu Blois intends sometime to look for phosphate there. There are prospects. In the mean time, he must have an agent at each place. These, I understand, are difficult to procure, because—well, you can see that life there would not be exactly pleasant. It would be lonely. There are a few blacks, of course; but, for the rest, nothing but sand, a few palms and one's own thoughts. It is presumably dangerous; but the compensation is twice our present salaries——"

Marshall began to flounder. Raymond, however, had no doubt whatever. He was ready now to take any risk to redeem their situations. His only hesitation was due to the fear he had of the effect of such a life on Marshall's volatile spirits.

"Sir, we are already under contract," he said tentatively.

"You will find the government gives me certain power," said Blois.

"In that case," said Raymond, looking at Marshall with a brooding expression, "if you are satisfied, why do you not play?"

"It is lonely, Raymond."

"Do you see any other solution?"

"Let us play, sir," said Marshall.

Again he lost.

UPON their arrival at the port of Djibouti, which is the French *entrepôt* for Somaliland and Abyssinia, all four disembarked.

Blois proved his importance by procuring the release of the two young men. The contracts were drawn up without delay by which they agreed to represent him and follow his instructions at Vidi-vidi and Mamsoul for two years, or until their recall. The only slight difficulty was raised by Raymond, who, after showing some foresight in the matter of inquiries, insisted that he be given the choice of Mamsoul.

No objection was raised to this. The American was quite indifferent; but Blois, actuated by a profound curiosity, for he had not yet succeeded in analyzing Raymond's character, insisted upon a reason. Raymond explained that of the two he was more adapted to solitude, and since Mamsoul promised this in a very high degree, he desired the post, since it gave him an opportunity to study. His real motive, which he did not divulge, was his feeling of responsibility for Marshall. He felt that his companion could not survive in complete solitude, and he intended that they should return together.

It happened that a small coasting ship was about to leave for the south. Passage was therefore procured upon this to a point as near their destinations as possible. Thence they were to sail onward by dhow. Their academic grounding in Arabic was deemed sufficient to serve their immediate simple needs, though a couple of Somali servants who spoke a few words of French accompanied them.

Upon the evening of their departure, Raymond received a note from Henriette, asking him to take a gharry and meet her on the long road to the Arab date plantation on the west of the town, explaining the difficulty of meeting at her residence, and urging that she wished to speak of things of supreme importance to them. Without consulting Marshall, who was spending his first advance light-heartedly at the tables of the café looking across the Place Menelik, Raymond procured a gharry and set forth promptly to the appointment. He had no further worries concerning LeRoy.

That amiable friend's lively spirits had quickly recovered from his loss on shipboard.

He actually looked upon himself as the winner!

"We are in luck," he had even declared, upon signing his contract. "Raymond, old chap, you must thank me for a bit of good fortune. We shall be little sultans. For myself, I assure you I shall have a harem."

Raymond met Henriette on the edge of a grove of date and pomegranate trees, sitting on the curb of a well. The few touches of color on the fringe of the hot drab scrub and desert beneath an almost white sky emphasized the isolation and beauty of the spot. It was full of dangerous, romantic suggestion. As he approached Henriette, Raymond could not fail to note, with almost a start of fresh surprise, her extraordinary and disturbing beauty. He weakened with the added instinctive knowledge that this glorious woman felt for him a genuine passion.

Nevertheless, cool and polite, after the first exchange of greetings, Raymond stood before her, attentive, embarrassed and aloof.

She was at a loss how to open the conversation. Finally, she told him that she had made inquiries concerning Vidi-vidi and Mamsoul, and she wished him not to go.

"But it is settled," he explained. "M'sieu Marshall goes to Vidi-vidi, and I go to Mamsoul."

"Do not go," she said gently. "I can exercise influence. I can have you kept here. It is not necessary for both of you to go—and—oh, I want you to remain."

"I must go with my friend, *ma'm'selle.*"

"You do not realize! I tell you it is awful! Three palms, perhaps; some mud huts and sand. That is all. Weeks, and months, and years! M'sieu Marshall would never refuse. Then why you?"

"I am to a certain extent responsible for him. If he is weak, it is another reason for me to share his fortunes."

She placed her hands impulsively on his shoulders, looking straight into his eyes. Raymond felt himself trembling; he wanted to clasp her violently in his arms.

"You must not go," she repeated. "Your friend can stand it perhaps; his spirits are effervescent. But it means a two years' blank for you; and afterward you will be but just beginning. Stay here. Oh, I beg you! Here you may know me better. I may see you more often. I am bold—I am indiscreet to say these things, but I cannot help it."

"If I did that, *ma'm'selle*, I should be faithless."

"Oh, I tell you there is no faith in life except in true love——"

A galvanic shock seemed to strike Raymond's heart. He recoiled a step, staring at Henriette fixedly, but in place of her brown eyes glittering with passion, he strove to recall the candid blue eyes of Marian as they poured forth a farewell of love and faith.

"No," he said calmly, after a moment. "I came with my comrade; I will return with my comrade."

Henriette, experiencing a terrible constriction of the heart, knew instinctively that it was useless to urge further.

"This is not a game," she said bitterly; "it is a struggle."

AS THE small dhow creaked and yawed in the long roll of the sea in its beat offshore from the bleak, glaring white strip of sand that was Mamsoul, the American, steadying himself, rose to his feet and waved farewell. For a moment there was a sinking in his heart as he beheld the slowly receding figure of his friend. Already the romantic glamour was somewhat dispelled; the bare facts of their new life baldly confronted them. And the bleakness of that shimmering shore was appalling.

A sense of guilt oppressed Marshall. Alone, his thoughts rushed in upon him, and he recollected that this forced abandonment of all their plans was due to his mad disregard of the happiness of others. His selfishness had thrown them both upon that desolate coast. As the white figure of Raymond, like a small piece of coral catching the blaze of sunlight that poured upon the shelving beach, standing against a limitless background of hot pale-sepia sky, faded slowly from vision as if sinking beneath a rising tide of viscous heat-waves, this sudden mood of depression was gradually dispelled. With a final wave of his arm, Marshall turned his back on his friend and faced the fascinations of an horizon that marked the crest of an eternal slope.

The dhow leaned on a new tack; it slipped down the long incline of the waves with a pleasant hiss. The ropes trimmed; the sailors sat about, lighted their earthenware narghiles and sang high-pitched songs of love and adventure and the sea. Marshall soon picked up the phrases of verse and sang with them, and the sounds, carried across the waters by the hot shoreward wind, reached Raymond, rousing in him the same emotion as that inspired by the murmur of pleasant voices when waking from disturbing dreams.

> Singing and gliding, as wild as the sea,
> Over the waves where love's fancy is free;
> Yet I am weary, love, longing for thee.
> Allah, O Allah! In chains I would be!
> Allah, O Allah! In chains I would be!

He felt lonelier when the sounds had ceased.

Mamsoul seemed to have this superiority over Vidi-vidi: two palm-trees grew in the zareba inclosing Raymond's mud-and-thatch hut; but the fronds, ceaselessly stirred by hot, sluggish winds, crackled and rasped against each other like dry bones. The sand, seeping round the walls of the hut, hissed with an unpleasant sound. The white sun blazed with baleful fury. The water, whispering on the long sloping beach where innumerable rock-crabs clashed their claws in pygmy defiance, gave no promise of coolness, for drab fins occasionally cut the sinister surface. The desert and scrub rolled away inland to dangerous lands of unsubdued tribes.

Raymond in this hot exile sat and stared through the heat haze, conjuring up memories, visualizing friends and distant places, filling in plans he hoped to materialize when the exile was over. In the cool of the evening he studied as well as possible, and read over and over the few books that were in his possession. In the beginning he wrote his ideas on scraps of paper, but it was an exhausting proceeding and led to nothing. For the first month he attempted to explore the vicinity of his post, but there was hardly anything to stimulate his interest—a few lean fishermen, tanned and shrunken by the sun until their hands looked like the hands of mummies, a mangy camel or two, come on the chance of collecting some bags of salt, and the sight of a distant sail.

He suffered some seemingly slight illnesses that made him careless of his domestic affairs—a touch of ophthalmia, an occasional gust of fever, a bit of the sun that left him despondent, weak and incapable of using his eyes to read or write without danger of permanently injuring them. His vitality at low ebb, the heat seemed to be crushing him into the sand. Nevertheless, feeling that Marshall was in need of his comfort and encouragement, he managed to write cheery letters to his friend at Vidi-vidi, which sometimes reached their destination, but more often did not.

In the evenings, when the long rays of the sun turned the desert red and flashed like steel across the vaguely stirring water, he would close his eyes and give himself up to memories. Sometimes he thought of Henriette; but these thoughts he stubbornly dismissed to dream again of Tours. In these delicious moments he seemed to feel the arms of his beloved Marian stealing about his neck, her tears touching his forehead, her voice murmuring brokenly in his ear; perfume seemed to hover about him, suggesting her nearness. He imagined conversations. Smiling and nodding his head, or laughing lightly at gay retorts, he would open his eyes to find his long black Somali servant regarding him with an expression of mingled insolence and curiosity.

He would affect to laugh with indifference.

"Ha, Ali! What do you bring? Pilau of fish again!"

LEROY MARSHALL, in Vidi-vidi, led a somewhat similar life. For him, however, there were none but superficial regrets. When life palled on him, he would sit and curse and expostulate with fate. He had no plans at all—all he wished was that the two years might slip more rapidly by, so that he might get back to the life of civilization.

He fished for sharks, while Raymond, in Mamsoul, saw in their sinister presence only a dreadful significance. He found a place for hunting in the scrub bush that rolled away from the shore to the higher slopes of the barren uplands, and actually secured a few trophies—a leopard cub snarled and clawed at the mats in his room; two graceful little dikdiks danced about the zareba.

There were more huts at Vidi-vidi and a few more fishing-boats than at Mamsoul. There was even a whining Hindu who had come with his family to carry on a meager trade in a tumble-down hut, constantly in mortal fear of the natives and in eternal hope that some day he would secure a satisfactory lump of the ambergris that is sometimes cast upon these shores; but his wife was young and comely, with the liquid eyes and suggestive languor of India, and when he saw her casting glances full of meaning upon the vigorous young American and the flashing, eager smiles that gave reply, the Hindu, with sickly gulps, abandoned his enterprise and set sail for other parts. Such promises of adventure gave life and an air of romance even to Vidi-vidi.

Marshall found the graceful Somalis, with their dazzling teeth, their large, expressive eyes and small, clean features, comely to behold, and built up a *ménage* with several retainers and maid servants. He worked off his spleen in terrrible bursts of temper, when he threatened cruelty and destruction to all about him; in consequence, his servants feared and respected him. He was hardly less comfortable, therefore, than he would have been in any meager village on an unfrequented bit of Mediterranean coast.

At first, occasionally, he, too, thought of Henriette; but that flame of passion flickered in the presence of more immediate occasions. If he thought of her at all, soon it was only with a passing sigh, a shrug of indifference, a mild expletive. The thought of Raymond roused peculiar reflections; for Raymond, judging his comrade's case by his own, used simple eloquence in his rare letters to cheer him and inspire him to perseverance. These letters, however, strangely enough, had the contrary effect, for they were about the only influence that caused Marshall to turn his thoughts in upon himself and consider his miserable situation. For a day or two he would actually be despondent. Recovery, however, was always rapid; and then he would laugh loudly.

"The poor little beggar must have the same temperament as Blois! 'Life is a struggle!' What is there terrible in this?"

And, in fact, for him there was not much that was terrible—a little loneliness, easily dispelled when he was once made familiar with the gossip of the natives, some discomforts for which he found compensations, and an absence of companionable intercourse which, nevertheless, enabled him to disregard all conventional codes to gratify his whims without restraint. The months, therefore, unmarked by changing seasons, slipped by unheeded.

He had to his credit a full year's salary unspent! There had been no means of spending it.

At the beginning of the second year, having become habituated to conditions, he began to consider drawing the money that was due him and spending it for pleasures. A camel, a surf-boat, a new gun, all became of more importance than any distant prospect. In the midst of these schemes, however, a letter suddenly arrived from Blois by special dhow that upset all his immediate plans.

Blois briefly stated that the presence of agents at Vidi-vidi and Mamsoul was no longer necessary. If, therefore, he were willing to cancel his contract with half the unfulfilled year's salary as a bonus, he might return immediately to Djibouti, stopping *en route* for Raymond, who had not been well, and prepare for his departure for France. A Messageries liner was leaving within the month.

In a flash all thoughts of remaining at Vidi-vidi were banished. Instantly the place became sordid and hateful. The reek of dead crabs; the hot, humid breath that rolled in from the wet tidal flats, making the prickly heat crawl up his back; the pestilential flies that droned heavily about his head or clung to him like grubs; the shrill, plaintive arguments of the members of his household all at once became unbearable. He took his leopard cub and loosed it in the bush; he let the little dikdiks leap to freedom upon the open plain; then, with a throbbing joy, he assembled his few effects and trophies, flung them into the dhow, and, dividing his household goods among his servants, set sail northward.

DRIVEN before a favoring breeze, every hour seemed to brighten the prospect of the future. He now spoke Arabic fluently. Lounging on cushions on the poop, he sucked the perfumed smoke of his narghile with perfect contentment, or, lifting his voice, burst into songs of the desert, of warm loves and dreamy nights, while the boatmen answered with panting choruses.

The swish of the lazy seas was music to him; the flash of the stars at night were dancing delights, and the winds that brought the spicy smells of the hot coast roused tumultuous emotions at the thought of the times to come. He began to feel, too, an unusual wistful gladness at the idea of seeing little Raymond again—calm, unruffled little Raymond—so loyal, so chivalric, so strong and tender for all his seeming prosiness! He knew there was romance in his comrade, for once he had, by bantering him, extracted a halting confession of his love for Marian. He knew the happiness, therefore, that Raymond would feel at the prospect of a reunion in France.

Nevertheless, he could not imagine placid, determined Raymond casting aside all restraint in the ardor of a romantic declaration.

Principally, Marshall wished again to encounter Blois.

Marshall himself was all he had ever anticipated—tanned by exposure, conversant in strange dialects, the hero of exotic romances, debonair and gallant. He wanted to sit opposite Blois at table, to fling his money on the board—the earnings of eighteen months at colonial rates—twelve thousand francs!—and ask him to judge, then, who was the winner.

When he reached Mamsoul and his swarthy crew dumped him on the wet sands, he made his way heavily through the vast colonies of land-crabs that scurried about his feet to the rising dunes upon which were the few huts that gave a name to the place.

It was shortly after dawn. The red sun, still thinly veiled in mists, cast sanguinary shadows upon the surface of the sea. Sand-flies darted annoyingly before Marshall's eyes, and the damp heat, exuded from the flat beach, rose up about him in steamy wraiths. The dhow, having slipped shoreward in the darkness, had escaped observation. All forms of human life still rested under shelter. The American's exuberant spirits, however, refused to be depressed.

Stumbling through the sodden sand, swearing at the flies that hung about his head, he at last reached the hut of sun-baked clay and thatch that was Raymond's residence. A native, dozing in the shadow of the wall, squatting with a white toga drawn over his head and two spears resting across his knees, awoke at his approach, and rising swiftly to his feet with an air that was startled and self-conscious, walked stiffly away.

Marshall hesitated, puzzled. The next moment, however, with a loud, cheerful shout, he flung aside the worn cotton sheet that hung over the doorway and plunged into the gloom within.

He was immediately conscious of a heavy, oppressive silence, a silence that seemed pregnant with a thousand inarticulate agonies. This silence gradually resolved itself into the low, unbroken hum of many flies. It seemed as though an icy hand suddenly closed upon Marshall's heart. Alone in the silence and gloom of the interior, he began to feel weak and tremulous with a horrible premonition. At last he was able to make out the figure of Raymond stretched on his charpoy with tightly clenched hands flung outward, his wide-open, vacant eyes looking straight upward at the tattered ceiling-cloth as though the film of death had come over them when trying to visualize some distant scene, some face beloved.

Raymond had been dead for two days. His servants, superstitious and shiftless, had first robbed and then abandoned the corpse.

The remainder of the journey to Djibouti was a dull, clouded dream to Marshall. The shock, the horror and dismay had completely overturned all his thoughts and inclinations. All merriment seemed to have evaporated from his heart.

There drifted across his memory pictures of trifles that suddenly glittered with tragic significance—Raymond stumbling against him on the gangway at Marseilles, and his subsequent retort: "Perhaps she rises to mark *my* destiny." Well, she had done that with her dubious affections that had stirred his resentment to a point of recklessness. The cynical Blois came to mind, apparently so leaden, yet with such power of seeming inertia as to sweep the good Raymond into his grave, to break the heart of Marian in Tours, to shake him, even, so that his whole nature had at last undergone a revolution. He thought once more of the fatal game of chance that had decided their destinies. It had been entered into so stupidly. He no longer claimed success. Nevertheless, the thought of Blois roused in him a slowly gathering anger, as one's gorge begins to rise in the presence of stupid, cruel, grinning oppression. If Blois's object had been more definite, he might still have respected him as an opponent; but his pretended philosophic antagonism had been too utterly wanton!

BLOIS was not in Djibouti when Marshall arrived, but was expected shortly to return from his coffee plantations near Harrar. Marshall therefore collected his eighteen months' pay from Blois's agent, but deferred securing his passage until the last moment, prompted by an unhappy reluctance to leave the country behind with Raymond buried in the sand.

He spent many hours of the day at an iron-topped table in front of the café on the edge of the Place Menelik, gloomily watching the strange types drifting by, making acquaintance indifferently with wanderers from along the coast, his plans still confused, his prospects lost in a maze of new conjectures over Blois. What would that man's attitude be?

An overpowering resentment grew slowly in his heart as he considered again the blasting power the man had been able to exercise. This thought suggested the idea that he himself, through his silly jealousy roused so lightly at the mere sight of Henriette and Raymond in conversation, had seemed to precipitate the whole tragic business. This thought recalled Henriette Lafarge to mind, and he began to wonder what her destiny had been.

One day he saw her in an open barouche, driving quickly across the opposite side of the *place*. At the sight of her he tingled from head to foot. A vital spark that had smoldered in him burst into flame again. Reaching quickly across the table, he touched the arm of his companion—a leering, cackling bit of flotsam whom fate had steered into this backwater of the coast for monetary refuge where he could reminisce garrulously to all who cared to listen and purchase him a *sirop*.

"Do you know that woman?" he demanded.

The bit of flotsam looked over the edge of his glass, nodded slowly and smiled with significance.

"Is she Ma'm'selle Henriette Lafarge? And does she not live in Madagascar?"

"I do not know. She is a pretty one—eh? But, my old chap, I would not advise you to show too much interest in her. It is not safe."

"I do not understand."

"Look at me," said the flotsam suddenly, with depraved importance. "What do you see? A fizzle! A burnt-out cartridge! Ten years ago I controlled most of the export of hides from Abyssinia and the Benadir coast. Nobody knows that business like me. I was pretty important, I tell you. Well, listen! I was honest; I believed in straight talk; every one trusted me. Then I ran against François Blois. You know him? Certainly! A serpent. No! Rather a hyena that laughs always where you cannot see him——"

Marshall, who had been listening as his eyes followed the retreating figure of Henriette, roused by the name of Blois, turned and stared fixedly at the speaker. The flotsam had lost his senile aspect. Leaning across the table, vibrant with suppressed anger, his eyes glittering with vehemence, his thick voice trembled.

"A hyena, then! Well, our paths crossed. My business was fair, straight, honest. I assure you that is true. I had reached the age of fifty. I was conservative and simple in my methods. I was proud to be honest. Yet, sir, in four years I had been reduced to this. He had tied me in tight knots; he had poisoned my friends, and terrified them so they dared not assist me—he had smashed my credit. The bank would not trust me. You cannot comprehend what that means—not to be trusted! When the bank dishonored me——"

"Sir," interposed Marshall, whose lack of understanding still made him feel a sort of contempt for any one who admitted defeat at the hands of Blois, whom he did not yet believe was capable of planning a shrewd act, "sir, pardon me; but I asked you if you knew Ma'm'selle Lafarge."

"Oh! Eh, well, of course; that is what concerns you most. Well, it is simply this: François Blois shows too great an interest in her. No one sees but me. But I can tell. She is, no doubt, the relative of some small official. Very well; so much the worse for her. He will find a means. He will ruin—I tell you, sir. Look at me! There are others, too.

"He is truly an animal—he destroys. Yet the devil in hell does not understand the subtleties of psychology as he does. For him, life is a game. He laughs as he plays. But for his opponents it is always a sad struggle."

THE American's heart, for a moment, ceased to beat. The terrible significance of this candid information all at once struck him like a blow. His swift intelligence leaped to correct conclusions. Blois's cynical observation, which he had considered when spoken as merely chance-flung words, he understood now to have been spoken in utter contempt for the intelligence of his opponent. It illumined, like a flash of light, all the events of the last year: "If you respect the prize, you should play the game with caution—though without mercy. There is no faith in man and no reliance in friendship. Play only to win, considering nothing but the prize."

That, then, was Blois's true philosophy.

He was not stupid—he was a monster!

Poor little Raymond and himself, who had dared look at the woman Blois had already fixed upon as his, had been sardonically tossed aside. That there had been the possibility of suffering and death in it had meant nothing to Blois. That Raymond had actually given up his life in agony—had wasted his intelligence, his nobility, his happiness, his life for nothing at all—for worse than that—to gratify the whim of a sensualist—undoubtedly seemed to him a matter worthy only of a secret laugh.

All of a sudden, the young American gave a short laugh and slapped his hands on the table. His companion, who had sunk into a brooding apathy, roused himself and looked at him inquiringly.

"My friend," said Marshall, "I, too, have always believed that life was a game; but only at this moment have I learned the rule of play. One must consider the subject always—and never take one's eye off one's opponent—eh?"

HE IMMEDIATELY sought out Henriette.

Her despair at the news of Raymond's death was tragic. Marshall firmly believed that she had made a sacrifice to save Raymond. In their common grief and love for that departed soul, they found a bond that drew them together.

Henriette made the discovery that Marshall had become a man; a year of rough contacts with primitive life had developed him; the last month of shock and grief had opened his comprehension to the significance of life and shaped him in heroic form. He had all at once become gentle, restrained, with a somber look in his eyes that indicated great courage and penetration. For his part, he learned that there had been no scandal in her relations with Blois; she was still staying with the wife of her deceased uncle—a vain, pompous little relic of the Empire, under whose eyes anything might happen so long as it was not talked about—but Blois certainly had the power to blast her with a jest. She no longer dared move for fear of him.

"Can you not return to France?" suggested Marshall.

"I have not the means. No excuse would satisfy my aunt. I dare not ask advice—I dare not! Oh, do you not understand? I lost *him* on account of that animal; I cannot risk the ruin of others who might help me."

An expression of happiness lighted Marshall's eyes. He took out his wallet and counted twelve five-hundred-franc notes upon the table.

"That will take you to France and keep you until you see me again, or hear from me."

"Oh, *m'sieu!* M'sieu LeRoy! This is impossible!"

She was covered with confusion and shame. She shrank away from him, and Marshall was at last convinced of her suffering, her humility and the depth of her capacity for sympathy and affection.

"There is no alternative," he said, with restraint, his eyes glowing as he looked at her. "You must return to France and wait until you hear from me."

"Oh, I cannot! I cannot! Why do you suggest this?"

In a low voice, vibrant with emotion, he said,

"We both loved Raymond."

Henriette sank into a chair. Overcome by this sign of friendship, she dropped her head in her arms upon the table and burst into tears. A spasm shook Marshall. He made an effort to control himself; but in another instant he flung himself on his knees by her side, and, half embracing her, exclaimed in a broken voice:

"But, above everything, Henriette, I love you! I love you! I ask for nothing now. I hope for nothing except that you continue to think of me. Can you understand I love you? It is the thought of you that will give me strength! I need your faith. I need your love!"

Astonished at this outburst, Henriette raised her brimming eyes.

She understood that Marshall's heart and soul and life were on his lips. The terrible conflict of emotions that had shaken her was suddenly stilled by a wave of tenderness. She realized, as the mother of sons must realize, that brother depends on brother, that the faith of a man is in the faith of his comrade. And Raymond was dead! Unable to resist, conquered by love when she believed love was dead, melting with that warm feminine ardor that is a mingling of protection and submission, she put her arms about his neck, looked into his eyes for an instant, and yielded her lips to him.

After a while, she said tremulously,

"But how can you have faith in me—you who know me?"

"Faith! Mother of God, if there is no faith in man, there is no hope in anything! I have learned that faith is the thing by which we live. There is only one thing that is greater. Love! Because it embraces faith. And—my life—I love you!"

THREE days later, Mademoiselle Lafarge at the last moment unexpectedly took passage on the S. S. *Saigon* for Marseilles. The day following, Blois arrived in Djibouti by train from Dire-Daoua, looking cool, impassive, and a trifle preoccupied, though his thoughts were taken up with unusual affairs. Shortly after his arrival, the American presented himself at his office, giving the appearance of being nervous, ill at ease, yet struggling with a strange eagerness.

At sight of him, a flicker passed over Blois's eyes. Almost at the same instant, however, his lips parted in a slow, friendly smile, and he invited Marshall to be seated. Soon Marshall told the whole story of his exile at Vidi-vidi and the tragic end of Raymond at Mamsoul. Blois nodded sympathetically.

"I should have thought," he said gravely, lowering his eyes, "that you would not have delayed a day longer than necessary in Djibouti. Why did you not sail at once for France on the *Saigon?*"

Marshall hesitated; then,

"I did not wish to go, sir."

"No? And why not?"

"Because I desire to return to Vidi-vidi."

Blois stared at Marshall doubtfully and with amazement. Finally he exclaimed,

"This is incomprehensible!"

Rising to his feet, strongly agitated, Marshall said, in an unsteady voice,

"You sent us to Mamsoul and Vidi-vidi to safeguard your interest in phosphate deposits?"

"Yes."

"For nothing else, sir?"

A suggestion of cunningness in this did not escape Blois. Without a waver in his direct glance, he replied coldly,

"For no other reason whatsoever."

"But," protested the American, "there was no phosphate."

"Then your duties were easily accomplished."

Instantly Marshall's countenance was wreathed in smiles he could not apparently restrain. He thrust a hand in his pocket.

"But, M'sieu Blois," he exclaimed, with ingenuous eagerness, "there was something else there! I am not a business man. I do not know what procedure is needed to procure the necessary concessions. But I have made a great discovery. Oh, how gladly I admit that you have won this little game we played between ourselves! You taught me a lesson. Now that I understand you, I throw myself on your mercy. I require your advice."

"*M'sieu?*"

"Yes, M'sieu Blois." Marshall placed three small dirty bottles upon the desk. In a trembling voice he said, "I discovered this—at Vidi-vidi."

Blois picked up the bottles, held them to the light, smelled them. They contained a liquid, thick and sirupy.

"It is petroleum," he said, with restraint.

"It bubbles from the sand!" cried Marshall.

"Bubbles?"

"Like liquid opals! I assure you, M'sieu Blois, I am rich! It can be pumped almost directly into vessels. I know little about these matters; but it must be obvious there is fabulous wealth there. O God, sir, how I long for that! I require only your backing—and haste! There has been a Hindu before us."

A terrible expression swept across Blois's face.

"Is he still there?"

"No. He sailed away three weeks ago."

"Cursed imbecile! Why did you not report this?"

A baffled expression, an expression of dismay and pain, through which a weak sort of dignity seemed to struggle, betrayed Marshall's emotions. He said plaintively,

"But, M'sieu Blois, after all, it is *my* discovery."

Blois gave a short, ironical laugh.

"Well, that's true. It's *your* discovery. Let us not quibble. But we must go immediately. We leave to-night."

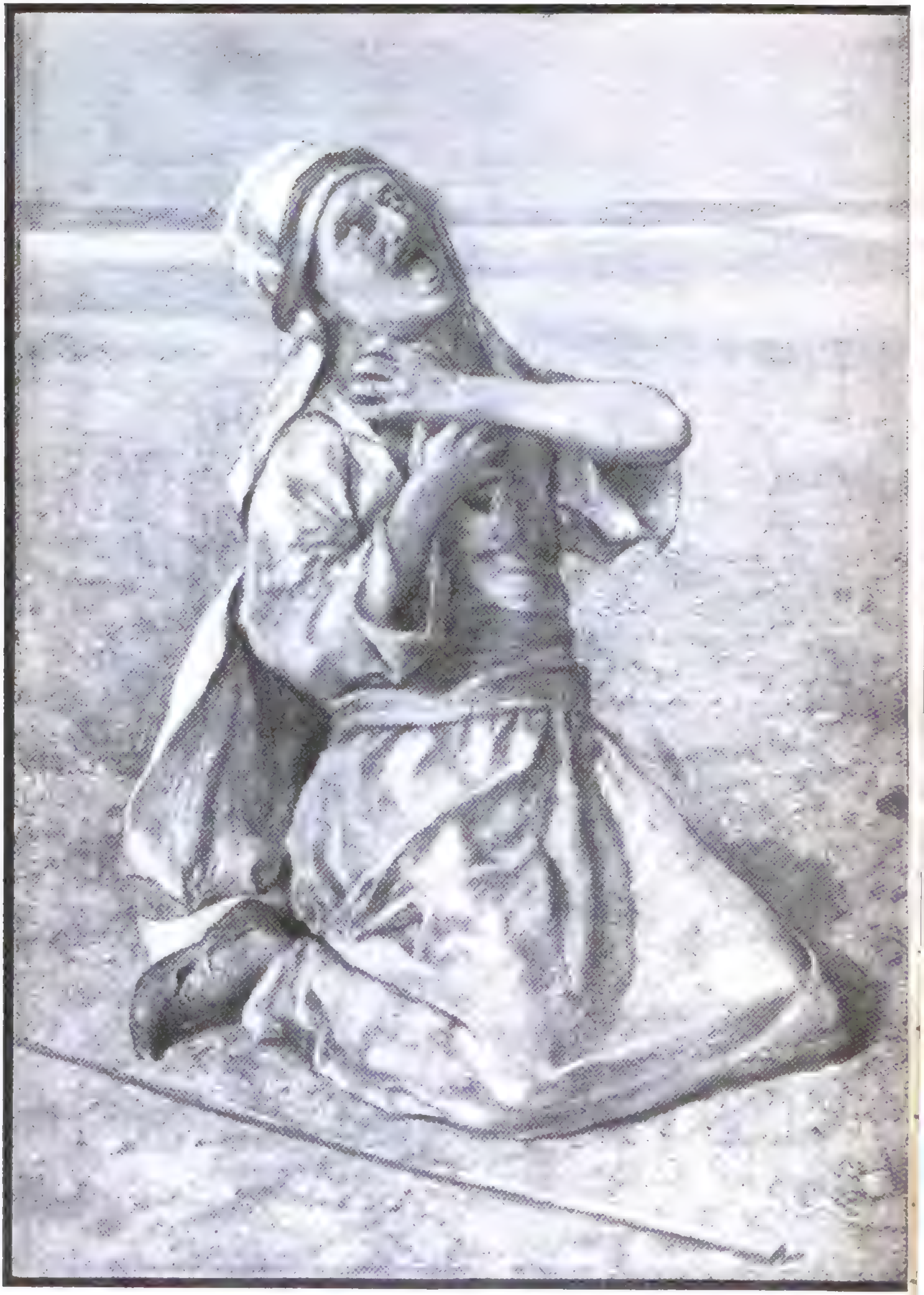
The American began to look uncomfortable, as though a doubt had crossed his mind. Shifting from one foot to another, he said softly,

"M'sieu Blois, I should like to stop at Mamsoul on the way."

"Upon our return."

"I wish once more to see M'sieu Delagrange's grave."

"But it will mean the loss of three days."



"I knew if we should die, I should not be the first. Blois was an unhappy sight. He cried—dry, shaking
breathed through his nostrils, he might have kept some

obs that contracted his throat and almost made him suffocate. If he had kept his mouth closed and
moisture in his throat. Pah! His will-power deserted him."

Google
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I should like *you* to see Mamsoul, sir."

"*I* do not share the sentiment."

"Ah, *m'sieu*, he was my friend!"

Blois exclaimed impatiently:

"After all, he is dead! It happens some time to all of us. We will let Mamsoul go by." With an angry glance, he repeated, "For the present, we will forget Mamsoul!"

Marshall appeared to give this a moment's melancholy thought. Then he sighed, shrugged his shoulders as though dismissing an unwelcome idea and smiled brightly. Blois slowly responded to this smile, though making little effort to conceal the contempt with which it was laden.

"Recently," he said whimsically, "we were opponents in a game. Now we seem to be partners."

"It is droll," laughed Marshall nervously. To himself he added, with implacable firmness, "We are mortal enemies."

As though to amuse himself before the slaughter he already contemplated, Blois continued, with a bland air of patronage,

"I may make you a rich man."

The American smiled gratefully, and murmured to himself,

"Your foot is already in the grave."

They left Djibouti that same night.

SIX weeks later, LeRoy Marshall, alone, presented himself to an amazed British agent at Berbera in British Somâliland and reported the death of Blois, the famous exploiter of new countries and valuable discoveries. The half-naked, wild-looking, sun-baked apparition who told his story to the British agent only succeeded in giving an incoherent, rambling, distracted account of what had happened. From this, the main facts were assembled to form the only public record of the tragic adventure.

The dhow in which Blois and the American had sailed from Djibouti had been wrecked somewhere below the Horn of Africa on a completely desolate stretch of coast, about half-way between Mamsoul and Vidi-vidi. The few surviving members of the crew vanished. Blois and Marshall thereupon disguised themselves with dirty cotton sheets and sandals and attempted to reach Mamsoul in the character of Bedouins cast ashore on a journey from Omân. After suffering terrific hardships, Blois had at last succumbed to thirst a short distance from Mamsoul, which the American reached on his hands and knees in a state of complete exhaustion.

That, officially, is the complete story.

Months later, however, when Marshall rejoined Henriette in Nice, he provided her with details of an astonishing and illuminating nature. He had recovered from his physical suffering, and with that recovery his spirits had become blithe again.

"Why not, my Henriette?" he protested cheerfully, lazily blowing wreaths of smoke that made halos over a blessed landscape. "Am I not, at last, the winner in this gamble of character? Do you not see that, on an equal footing against an opponent who could be as ruthless as he, that stupid wolf had but little chance? I suffered? Ah, in my worst agony, I assure you I cackled with delight."

Henriette looked at her husband with adoration and a certain timidity. This corsair, whose firm flesh was beginning to glow again beneath a weather-beaten exterior, whose eyes could flash with animation or glow with profound introspection, whose every movement indicated grace, strength and a consciousness of power, was so entirely different from the gay, irresponsible youth whom she had first encountered.

"At every point I beat him," said Marshall. "Listen! He was avaricious. Therefore I played upon his cupidity. I placed before him three little bottles. 'Look!' I cried, with the shallow cunningness of a Mascarille; and I infected him with my enthusiasm. I had won the first point.

" '*M'sieu,*' I said, with tears in my voice, 'let us stop at Mamsoul.' He was utterly callous to the tenderness of human emotion. Yet I gave him every opportunity. One day at Mamsoul, I urged; one hour! No! He was brutal. With a sneer, he reminded me that every one dies once. Very well then, we did not stop at Mamsoul. I had won the second point.

"After we had passed some distance beyond Mamsoul, then the game began in earnest. I conspired with the captain of the clumsy craft; it was not too difficult to drive the dhow at night upon the barren, unmarked coast. The crew vanished. When dawn came, Blois and I looked upon a scene of complete desolation. Alone we faced the unknown terrors of the desert scrub, wild, waterless, perhaps inhabited by merciless savages.

"'If we do not reach Mamsoul,' I said, 'we will surely perish.'

"'Vidi-vidi,' he said, 'is perhaps nearer.'

"'Very well,' I said; 'but in this matter we stake our lives. Whichever way we go we must suffer. For myself, I return to Mamsoul.'

"He prepared to follow me. Suddenly I became stern.

"'The issue,' I said, 'is life or death. We may hinder each other. And for myself, I mean to live.'

"He said nothing, but looked at me curiously. I pointed out that if we encountered a single native in our garb as Christians we were dead men. He laughed.

"'*I* can assume the disguise of an Arab,' he said.

"Very well! We made rough togas from the tattered sail-cloth, and cut sandals from the burst water-sacks of goatskin. Armed only with sticks, then we set off. The terms were equal. I had won my third point!"

MARSHALL paused a moment with an air of abstraction; then passed his hand swiftly and firmly over his eyes, as though to obliterate an unpleasant impression. The pictures that he conjured up could not have been pretty ones. He looked at Henriette doubtfully.

"And—" she breathed.

"For the rest," he continued suddenly, "I cannot give you details. We took many days through unknown and desolate country; there was nothing to eat, nothing to drink. Nevertheless, I knew if we should die, I should not be the first. Blois was an unhappy sight. His lips were cracked; his tongue so swollen he could hardly speak; yet he kept cursing me in thick accents. I think I must have laughed at him. I don't know. I can hardly remember anything. But I do remember that he commenced to cry——"

"To cry! Blois?"

"Oh, but yes! You cannot imagine! He cried—dry, shaking sobs that contracted his throat and almost made him suffocate. If he had kept his mouth closed and breathed through his nostrils, he might have kept some moisture in his throat. Pah! His will-power deserted him. He had no one to bully. At last, all he could do was puff out his lips. Once I heard him say: 'Bubbling! Bubbling! Bubbling like opals!' After that, I have no recollection whatever of him. Everything was a fiery blaze of light. I crawled in the dust on my hands and knees. I looked nowhere but to the front, and in the end I saw on a sand-dune two imperfect plumes—the palm trees of Mamsoul."

"My God!" murmured Henriette, twining her fingers together distractedly. "Did you realize? Had you prepared? That is, when you started, did you realize what was before you?"

Marshall looked at her with a radiant and reassuring smile.

"Certainly. Every last detail. It was a test of character. But, Henriette, it was a great deal more. Five things sustained me—my love of you, my hatred of Blois, my determination to avenge Raymond—and—two little pebbles tucked under my tongue."

"Two little pebbles?"

"That was merely a trick, a savage invention to preserve moisture in the mouth. But now I will tell you something that is truly strange. The three bottles of oil were genuine. I had actually discovered the petroleum bubbling from the earth——"

"And you kept that secret locked in Vidi-vidi?" Henriette exclaimed.

"Ah, it was not at Vidi-vidi. I made the discovery at Mamsoul, where Blois had refused to go, though I insisted. Yes—and yet it was a bitter experience. I had to dig the grave of my comrade. I dug deep, very deep, for there are hyenas and jackals in that country—and, oh, he was my friend! My heart was in that grave. Well, presently, I came to a clayey strata; when I had penetrated this, suddenly the oil bubbled forth at my feet— Imagine, if you can, my emotion! My comrade's death had opened this rich legacy for my disposal."

Tears suddenly gushed from Henriette's eyes. She bowed her face in her hands. The American, flinging his cigaret away, went quickly to her side, put his hands upon her shoulders and his cheek against hers. His eyes were deep and soft; his face was suffused with an inexpressible tenderness.

"It was a legacy," he said gently, "that insures our happiness." Then he added firmly, "But it was also a weapon he placed in my hands to avenge him."

The Day of Atonement

So Sound and Dramatic Is this Tale That a Manager Plans to Make a Play of It. The Author Confesses That He Isn't the Idol of Millions of Readers Now, but We Predict That He Will Make Friends Fast

By Sampson Raphaelson

"WHAT Jack Robin needs," said David Lee, who owns some of the whitest of Broadway's white lights, "is a wife."

"What our Jakie needs," said Jack Robin's father, old Cantor Rabinowitz, of the Hester Street Synagogue, "is a God."

"What I need," said Jack Robin, "is a song-number with a kick in it. The junk that Tin Pan Alley is peddling these days is rusty—that's all—*rusty.*"

And the sum and substance of it was a sober-faced Jack, engaged fitfully in experiments with pleasure, a worried but watchful David Lee, and a tragically lonely household on Hester Street, where dwelt the aged cantor and his wife.

For Jack was no ordinary singer of ragtime. Those dark eyes of his might have been the ecstatic eyes of a poet in the days when the Chosen People lived sedately in the land of Canaan. They might have been prophetic eyes, stern and stirring, in the years of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, King of Judah, when Jerusalem "knew not its God." They might have been deep wells of lamentation even one generation ago had his lyric voice been born to cry the sorrows of Israel in a Russian synagogue.

But he lived in New York, and his slender, well-set-up figure was draped in perfectly fitting suits of Anglo-Saxon severity, and his dark hair was crisply trimmed and parted after the fashion of young America, and the black eyes in his thin, handsome face were restless, cynical and without joy.

That bewilderment, brooding and fitful, which was now so palpable, had vaguely begun to propel Jack in the days when, as Jakie Rabinowitz, he had drifted with a gang of Hester Street hoodlums. He was twelve then, rather tall and sturdy for his age, and for an exciting few weeks he enjoyed the thrills of looting fruit-stands, of stealing milk-bottles and of openly shooting craps. But the bliss of these few weeks came to a hysterical termination when he violated the code of the gang, and it was not until ten years later, when he knew Amy Prentiss, that he felt such happiness again.

The gang's code regarded certain acts of loyalty as religion, and certain epithets could be avenged only in blood—the blood of a bleeding nose or a lacerated lip. Foremost among the firebrand epithets was the term "sheeny." If some one called you a sheeny, only one thing could properly ensue—violent fistic battle. But Jakie, traversing Cherry Street, the Irish domain, received the stigma with indifference.

He and nine-year-old Hymie Cohen were on their way home from an East River salt-water swimming-shack, where for a dime they had received the use of faded trunks and the privileges of a moldy wooden tank. A barefoot young "mick," slighter than Jakie but of truculent demeanor, had united ten fingers with his nose in a trestle of vilification and cried: "Yah! Lookit the sheeny! Go back where yah came from, yah sheeny!"

Jakie shrugged his shoulders and passed

Copyright, 1921, by Sampson Raphaelson.

on. Neither righteous indignation nor the tremors of fear had risen within him.

Little Hymie told his brother Joe of the humiliating incident, and that night Joe asked Jakie about it.

"Yah didn't fight, did yah?" he demanded. "Yah didn't do nothin'?"

"Why should I fight? I wasn't mad."

Joe stepped close to Jakie.

"You're yeller! Yah got a yeller streak a mile wide right t'rough to your liver! Yah can't hang around wit' de gang no more. Go 'way before I paste yah one on the jaw!"

This was disturbing. Jakie was not minded to obedient alacrity. He responded with a show of spirit,

"I'll go when I feel like it!"

Joe's response was a contemptuous slap over the eyes—a slap which stung and infuriated. Sobbing and seeing red, he fell upon Joe and blindly pommeled away with his fists.

AFTER it was over and Jakie lay on the curb with a "shiner," a bleeding nose, and a perforated dental display, sobbing breathlessly and cursing in richly filthy East Side *argot*, Joe came up to him.

"I take it back, Jakie," he said, proffering his hand. "Y'ain't yeller. I——"

"Go to hell," Jakie panted, "you dirty sheeny!"

Jakie went directly home that night and endured stoically his father's scolding and his mother's running fire of questions. Dwelling in a passion of hatred for the complete order of things, his parents exasperated him into a seething calm beyond the point of articulate resentment. The next day he played truant from Hebrew school.

The *Melammed*, who was receiving a dollar a month extra for teaching the cantor's son, anxious to prepare him magnificently for the *Bar Mitzvah* recitative and speech in the synagogue, went out in search of the boy. He found Jakie playing basket-ball in the Hester Street playgrounds, dragged him back to the small, ill-smelling, gas-lit room where a few of the older boys still were singsonging the cadenced subtleties of "*Baba Kama*," and flogged him until his body was purple.

Jakie came home that night somewhat terrified by the decision he had made, yet completely set in his determination. He was acute enough to speak to his mother first.

"Mamma, that *Rebi*—he ain't no good. He's so *dirty*, and he's always hollering, and, anyways, none of us kids ever learns anything. And he nearly killed me to-day, mamma, with a big strap— Look how sore my back is—and I never did nothing at all!"

"I'll tell papa," said his mother, busily applying goose-grease to his tortured back, "and he'll speak to the *Rebi* he shouldn't hit you no more."

"I don't wanna go to *Chaidar*," Jakie announced, with low-voiced intensity.

"Jakie! Your papa shouldn't hear you speak like this! How could you ever be a *Chazon*—a cantor in a big fancy synagogue—if you don't know good your Hebrew? I'll speak to papa he should find you a new *Chaidar* and a new *Rebi*."

"I don't want no new *Chaidar*, and I don't want to be a *Chazon* when I grow up!"

"Jakie! Eat your supper and don't speak it another word like this! Lucky your papa he's ain't home, or he would kill you."

The boy did not move toward the table. He raised a blazing face to his mother.

"If papa kills me," he said, "then I'll run away from home."

The old cantor did whip Jakie. It had long been a matter of profound distress to the cantor that a youth with so nimble a mind should be so diffident in the presence of the great culture of the noblest of all peoples. For ten generations, in Russia and now in America, the name "Rabinowitz" had stood for devout, impassioned *Chazonoth*, and Jakie's father was animated by the one desire that his son should become even a greater cantor than himself.

"I can see it comes a day when the Children of Israel will need it more *Chazonim*," the old father had said once to his young son. "It's too good here in America—too much money—too much telephones and trains and ragstime. A little bit more God ain't a bad thing, Jakie. Music is God's voice, and you make it your papa and mamma happy, Jakie, if you grow up to be a great *Chazon* like your grandfather in Vilna *olav-hasholom*."

"Aw, gee," Jakie had responded; "I wish the *Rebi* would comb his whiskers onct in a while!"

Fervently considering his God, the cantor had beaten Jakie soberly, and the boy had been inclined after that to listen in silence, if with resentment, to his pleas and homilies. That beating a year ago was the first Jakie had suffered from his father. The present belaboring was the second and last. That night, while his parents slept, Jakie, true to his word, did run away from home.

A policeman found him, two days later, white with hunger and dragging his feet with weariness. His parents, who had become panic-stricken, overfed him and put him tenderly to bed. In the next few days they argued and pleaded with him, and, before they admitted defeat, wept before him.

"I'll sing in the choir every Sabbath," he said then. "But, honest, pa, *honest*, I'd quicker die than go every day to a *Chaidar*."

His father had to find comfort during the several years that followed in hearing the liquid golden tones of Jakie's alto voice in the choir only on Sabbath and on holy days.

"Maybe," he said to his wife, "maybe when he gets older, he'll see how beautiful is *Yiddishkeit*. Maybe he would stop hanging around music-places and singing these ragstime songs what all the bums they sing."

"I'm afraid, Yosele; I'm afraid," she sighed. "When he grows older, a job he'll get it—in a tailor shop, maybe—and right away with a girl he'll be running around."

"Better he should never marry," the cantor cried, "than with one of these peek-a-boo-waist girls with paint on the faces! Oy, Rivka mine, why ain't it here in America good healthy girls like you was?"

BUT girls were not in Jakie's mind. The few who moved through his life had laughed too much and listened too little. They were shrill creatures, made for anything but love. They were haughty when they should have been humbly eager, and they greedily mimicked things they should austerely have left alone.

He might have sunk to a Russian kind of morbidness if he had not been caught up in the stream of highly seasoned folk-song which poured constantly from Tin Pan Alley.

By the time he was eighteen he moved in an unreal, syncopated world of his own. If he had a sentimental grief, what better relief than sitting in the dark of his bedroom in the tiny Hester Street flat and howling dolefully the strains of "Down by the Old Mill Stream"? If the joys of being alive smote him, what could more sweetly ease the ache of happiness than the plaintive blare of "Alexander's Ragtime Band"?

So he haunted the motion-picture shows.

Then one night he got a job singing popular songs in the Great Alcazar Palace on Grand Street—one of the new movie-houses with rococo modeling in front, a house penetrating into the bowels of the building to a greater depth than its rickety, makeshift predecessors. And later that night his father told him never to show his face in the Hester Street home again.

"Better I shouldn't have it no son at all. Your loafer's talk stabs me in my heart. I couldn't bear to see your face no more—bum! In a synagogue you don't even put your head. For ten generations was every Rabinowitz a God-fearing *Chazon*, and you—my only son—street-songs you are singing! Go! Be a ragstime singer with the bums!"

How could the old cantor, or, for that matter, Jakie himself, understand that instead of being sinful and self-indulgent, loose and lazy, this grave-eyed boy with the ways of the street was sincerely carrying on the tradition of plaintive, religious melody of his forefathers—carrying on that tragic tradition disguised ironically with the gay trappings of Broadway and the rich vulgarity of the East Side? Instinctively the East Side responded to it, for people came hours early to the Great Alcazar Palace and stood in line twenty deep to hear Jakie, now Jack Robin, sing "Lovey Joe" or "When Dat Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'."

"Chee, but that baby can rag!" they said, as they swayed, hypnotized, to the caressing quavers of his voice. They knew only that he caught at their heart-strings. They failed to perceive that Jakie was simply translating the age-old music of the cantors—that vast loneliness of a race wandering "between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born"—into primitive and passionate Americanese.

One year Jakie spent thus, and then David Lee, on a periodical scouting expedition, drifted into the Great Alcazar Palace. A short, fat man with cold blue eyes in a round pink face, Lee slipped unnoticed into the dark of the last row. He heard Jack Robin render "Underneath the Sugar Moon" with swifter, more potent tunefulness than a certain black-face comedian whom he was paying a thousand a week for singing the same song on Broadway. As a result, Jack Robin found himself booked on the great Keats vaudeville circuit.

"It's up to you," David Lee told him. "If you can put it over in vaudeville for a year or two, I'll place you on Broadway in electric lights."

With money and comfort and prestige tossed into his lap, a certain change came slowly over Jack. The clouds, lifting away, did not reveal sunshine, but a gray void. The clouds had been grim, inexplicable, tormenting—but they had inspired. The present void was reflected by emptiness in Jack. He was singing badly when he encountered Amy Prentiss, who was billed by the Keats people as "The World-Famous Dancer of Joyous Dances."

It was in San Francisco. Her act preceded his, and he stood in the wings, waiting his turn. Slender, dark-haired, blue-eyed, she had none of the Oriental instinct for undulation which Jack had understood so easily and to which he was so casually indifferent. Her open, frankly gay movements, her girlishly graceful fluttering pricked him to a breathless interest. She was bafflingly foreign to him—everything about her. Elusive, infinitely desirable to his naturally complex nature because of her simplicity, *she* was seeing the sunshine which for him did not exist. As he stood there watching, Henrietta Mooney, of the Mooney Ballet, joined him.

Henrietta's name off-stage was Sadie Rudnick. Jack had seen her performance several times in the past few years, and, while it was skilful and had its charm, its qualities were no mystery to him. Nor was Henrietta herself a mystery, for with one glance Jack knew her as baldly as he would a sister. "A clever Grand Street kid—in her second youth."

Henrietta listened in the wings at this Monday matinée while Jack went through his performance. She was there when he came off, and came directly up to him, saying without preliminaries,

"Kiddo, I heard you last September in Chicago, and you're losing the wallop."

Jack smiled without replying.

"What's wrong?" the girl persisted. "Booze?"

Jack shook his head amiably.

"Is it a skirt?"

"No; and it isn't an off day, either," he said wearily. "Guess I'm just getting tired of the game."

"Bunk!" was her scornful response. "You were born to the profession."

With the easy fellowship of the stage, they became chummy during the week. They would stand idly in the wings during the greater part of the performances, exchanging comments and gossip. Jack liked Henrietta's sturdy honesty, her slangy sophistication. Saturday evening, as he was hungrily following the fairylike movements of Amy Prentiss, Henrietta said,

"That girl's got your goat!"

"Do you think so?"

"Say—do I *think* so? I *know* it!"

"I wonder why," he mused audibly.

Henrietta looked him squarely in the eyes.

"You wonder why? She's a *Shiksa;* that's why! I've seen Jewish boys fall that way before. It ain't new to me." There was bitterness in her voice.

"But why?" Jack repeated, more to himself than to her. "Why?"

"You come from the Ghetto, and she studied fancy dancing in a private school. You're the son of a poor old *Chazon,* and she's the daughter of a Boston lawyer. You're— Aw, you make me sick!"

ABRUPTLY Henrietta left him, and during the one remaining day of their stay in San Francisco she avoided him. But her words stayed with him; they pried brutally into his apathy; they jeered him from afar; they came terribly close and stung him. The thought of approaching this lovely dancer with the quiet eyes and the gentle mouth frightened him a little; but his fear angered him. As she came out into the wings Saturday night, she found him in her path.

"Say—" he began. She stopped, smiling uncertainly. Jack, to her, was a pleasingly debonair figure with a handsome face, glowing eyes. His manner she hadn't the time or the gift to analyze.

"I have to hand it to you," he went on, self-consciously, flushing to the roots of his hair. "You—you dance with more real class—I mean to say—you're darn good—" He paused, floundering.

It is a curious fact that often the only signs of yearning, of sincere and painful humbleness, of profound anxiety to express fine things consist of awkwardness—of a stilted nonchalance. His confusion served simply to embarrass her. She strove, not in vain, for poise to cover her embarrassment. Her only recourse was to smile vaguely and say, "Glad you liked—uh—" And then, fearing that he might gurgle more badly still, she passed on.

Jack hated her for having made it so hard for him.

"I know she don't care a damn about me," he told himself savagely. "But she didn't have to make a fool of me. She could have said a few civil words, even if I don't mean anything in her life."

In San Diego, in Dallas, in San Antonio, in New Orleans and in the other cities he made on the long swing back to New York, his eyes seemed to seek morbidly for further evidences of the simple, unruffled Anglo-Saxon quality of temperament. He found plenty of them, and, as the weeks passed, they served to beat him down into a soothing numbness, which was bad for the audiences, who sat stonily through his performances. Henrietta's words would constantly drum into his ears: "You come from the Ghetto, and she's the daughter of a Boston lawyer."

IT WAS slowly, because he was fundamentally temperate, that he learned to seek self-respect in barrooms. No one else would have called it that. It had too little of the nature of peace. It brought back the invigorating uncertainty, the inspiring restlessness of his adolescent days. It eliminated, for the moment, this new numbness which had come upon him, this queer sensation of being softly strangled. And, since it substituted his old *Weltschmerz* for the feeling of being slowly buried into a grave of inarticulateness by the Amy Prentisses of the world, his ragtime singing got back some of its old lilting plaintiveness.

Jack saw his parents occasionally. His mother's furtive pride in the adulation which younger Hester Street gave to her son had even begun to reflect itself in a way in the old cantor.

"Every actor he's ain't a loafer, Yosele," she would say. "Look—is Jacob Adler a loafer? A finer man you couldn't find it if you should search a whole lifetime."

"But he's a *Yiddisher* actor, *Leben*. He feels the *Yiddishe* heart. And our Jakie sings ragstime—like a *Shagetz!*"

"I know—I know," she soothed him. "But he's an American boy. And he's a good boy. He's sending you and me presents only last month from New Haven. He lives a clean life, Yosele. Maybe soon he makes enough money and he goes into business and gets married and comes regular every Sabbath and holy day to the synagogue."

When he visited them in the summer, Jack's dumb unhappiness became apparent to them. They took it for a good sign—for indication of a new, more mature thoughtfulness. His booking for the year ended, he took a month's vacation and spent two weeks of it in New York. For two consecutive Sabbath days he attended the synagogue, and the old cantor, singing from the pulpit, exulted in the conviction that his son was returning to his God.

Indeed, Jack himself found a certain solace in it. As he sat on the old familiar wooden bench, clothed in the silk *Talis*—the prayer-shawl which his father had so solemnly presented to him on the occasion of his *Bar Mitzvah*—with good old Yudelson, the cobbler, on one side of him, and stout, hearty, red-bearded Lapinsky, the butcher, on the other, he felt a singular warmth and sweetness. And the voice of his father, still clear and lyric, rising in the intricacies of the familiar old lamenting prayers—prayers which he remembered perfectly, which he would never forget—the dissonant rumble of response from the congregation, the restive shufflings of youngsters—all these were to him blessedly familiar and blissful.

In the murmurous peacefulness of those two weeks his father talked to him constantly of the austere beauties of the ancient ways of his people, and it began to appear to Jack that there was indeed something to be said for them. He could not and did not dismiss his father's world as he used to—with a sneer and the words: "Dead! I tell you that stuff's behind the times." For he began to feel that if it was a dead or a dying world, still it possessed some reality, an orderly nobility; while the world he was alive to was chaotic, crassly unreal.

During the two weeks which followed in Atlantic City he thought a good deal on this, but the nearness of violins and cocktails, the flash of women and the glamour of moonlight on the sea made it easy for him to decide arbitrarily that it was rather an abstract problem.

In Buffalo, where he opened with his act, he began committing the unforgivable sin in the theatrical world—he began missing performances. He had lost all vital interest in his work.

By the time he was playing in Chicago, reports of his derelictions had reached David Lee, who, after long pondering, wrote a severe note.

"What Jack Robin needs," Lee said to Harry Anthony, his partner, "is a wife." In his note he said:

> If I can't depend on a performer being steadily on the job, no matter if he has the genius of Booth and the popularity of George Cohan, I will not have him in my employ. I don't know what's ailing you, but whatever it is, you must steady down. There isn't a producer or booking-office in New York that will gamble on you if you're not completely dependable, and we're no exception.

Jack smiled crookedly when he read this. It came at a most unfortunate time, for, having arrived in Chicago that morning, Jack had discovered that the sixth number on the bill with him at the Majestic was "The World-Famous Dancer of Joyous Dances."

And this discovery was sending him sauntering, blithely bitter, to Righeimer's bar.

IT WAS two in the afternoon. His act went on at three. The act of the girl whose unseen nearness possessed the power to slash him into bewilderment would begin at four. If he left the theatre promptly after his act, most likely he could avoid seeing her. And, with a comforting cargo of Righeimer's product on board, he felt he would be able to give an account of himself on the stage.

To make doubly sure that the sense of Amy's nearness would not cause his heart to sink before the footlights, he took three or four extra drinks. They more than achieved their purpose. The world became an insignificant turmoil underneath his feet, and he strolled, his smile growing steadily more crooked, down Clark Street toward Madison, where at the Morrison bar they could mix the finest Tom Collins in the world. The words of David Lee's letter came into his mind. "'Completely dependable'—that's me! I'll drink all the Tom Collinses Jerry can mix—to the great god Dependability."

He halted in the crush of traffic on the corner, and, not two feet away from him, jammed by a fat woman on one side and grabbed at on the other by two sticky children, he saw Amy Prentiss. As his eyes glimpsed her proud little head, brown-toqued, quaintly half veiled, his lips compressed into a straight line and he turned sharply away. But the crowd began to move; Amy had seen him, and she was already edging her way toward him. Her face smiled a friendly greeting, and involuntarily Jack looked behind him to see if it were not some one else she was addressing.

"Why, Mr. Robin!" she was saying. "I was just going to the house early to see your turn."

Jack was dumb. They crossed Madison Street together in the surge of the released crowd.

"How did you happen to recognize me?" he blurted.

"You recognized *me*, didn't you?"

"Oh, I recognized you, all right." Jack paused. He longed for an hour in solitude, so that he could think. "This gets me," he confessed. "Your knowing me so quickly, and your actually going early to see my act."

"You're funny. Hasn't anybody let you in on the secret that you're one of the few real rag-singers in America? As for remembering you, how could I ever forget your genuine little compliment on my act out on the Coast?"

They had turned the corner at Monroe Street and were at the entrance to the Majestic. Jack looked hurriedly at his watch.

"Listen," he said; "I have to speed like the deuce to make it. I want to see you—talk to you some more. Meet me after your turn."

His mind raced in zigzags as he hastened to his dressing-room. He searched his memory for the exact wording of Amy's remark that Saturday in San Francisco, for her expression. He tried to see and hear again the outward things and to give a new, inner meaning to them. But all he could recall was the bitterness in him, the significant and fateful words of Henrietta, and

Amy's vagueness, which turned the knife in his wounded vanity. And now she had voluntarily talked to him; she was deliberately coming to see him perform; she had been pleasant, approachable, inviting. His mind could find no place for such a manifestation from this girl.

His performance that matinée was discouragingly poor. Amy made no comment on it when they met.

"Let's have dinner somewhere," Jack suggested. "That is"—a flicker of his old wretchedness returning—"that is, if you haven't made any other arrangements, and—and if——"

"I should be glad to."

They dined at the Café Lafayette, which has a sedate lower floor and an upper floor with an orchestra for dancing. It had been in Jack's mind to avoid the beat of syncopated music, but by the time they reached the restaurant, the sweet poise of the girl had filled him with unreasoning dismay at himself. The old familiar bewildered sinking of the heart followed. And so he led her up-stairs. A violin was weaving a slim pattern of simple melody, which was being tortured into savage bedlam by the bullet-like spitting of the drum and by the saxophone's gusts of passionate whining.

He felt instinctively that liquor was not on the cards. But he was tense, strung up, dreadfully nervous.

"Let's dance," he said.

The music was sending forth a one-step, and Jack gave himself to it hungrily. He seemed, somehow, to make of the simple steps a wild, heart-breaking aria, a mad pounding on the doors of heaven.

Back at the table they sat a while in silence. Amy studied his face. She said, "You dance differently from any one I know."

Jack flushed.

"I don't suppose I dance very well. I—I wish I could dance standing straight and moving sort of—well, evenly and correctly, if you know what I mean. Like that fellow, for instance." He indicated a tall, stolid-looking youth who was soberly and skilfully maneuvering a sleek young creature about the polished floor.

"That's funny," Amy remarked. "I'm crazy about the way you dance. I never quite liked any one's dancing so well. You danced to-night the way you used to sing—the way you sang when I first heard you in New York."

"You *like* my dancing?" Jack leaned to her, unbelieving. His voice came huskily. "*You* don't dance that way—even on the stage. You dance more like that fellow. I don't mean stiff as him—not that. But you're his kind, if you know what I mean. I'm—I'm crazy about that quality in you. I'd give anything if I could have it—that careless, happy— Guess I'm talking like a fool," he ended lamely.

But Amy, her eyes aglow, was leaning to him.

"You're the *funniest* person! I've been crazy about the very thing in you that you're deprecating. I wish I had it. I'd give *anything* to have it. It—it hurt me a lot to find your performance to-day lacking in it."

THEY dined and danced together every day that week. There was no making of appointments after that evening; tacitly they met after Amy's turn and went out together. Jack went about in an unreal world. He tried to think, but his mind persisted in substituting the turn of Amy's wrist, the curve of her cheek, the gay animation of her eyes, the little liquid turns in her voice.

Each day he grew more afraid of her while she was with him and more desolate while she was not. His only interludes were when they danced. The blare of the orchestra had somehow for him become Music—a glorious substitute for tears, a gleaming speedway for a breathless race hand in hand with grief. Sunday evening—the last of the week they would have together—he found himself holding Amy crushingly close, and he relaxed sharply, dancing badly after that.

Back at the table, sitting side by side on an upholstered bench against the wall, Amy chattered happily until she became aware that Jack was not listening. His food untouched, he was staring with undisguised misery before him. Amy placed her hand lightly over his on the seat.

"What is it?" she asked.

He withdrew his hand, afraid. For a moment he was silent, and Amy repeated her question.

"I—I suppose you think I'm out of my head, but—I—I'm crazy about you."

"I'm crazy about you, too," said Amy promptly.

Jack looked at her then, a puzzled, imploring look.

"You don't know what I mean."

"What do you mean?"—with a flicker of a smile.

He breathed deeply.

"I mean that I love you—that I want to marry you."

"That," said Amy, "is what I thought you meant."

LATE that night, in his room at the hotel Jack scribbled a note to David Lee and one to his mother. To Lee he wrote:

> You needn't worry any longer about my dependability. I'm engaged to be married. . . . She's the kind of a girl who could no more understand my not being on the job than she could understand quitting of any kind. I'm going to work my head off. If it's in me at all, I'll be on Broadway in a year.

To his mother he wrote briefly that he was to be married, mentioning the girl's name, Amy Prentiss.

His letters brought two prompt results. David Lee offered him a part in the coming "Frivolities" and instructed him to leave for New York at once for rehearsals. And old Cantor Rabinowitz, not so strong as he used to be, had a nervous collapse.

"A *Shiksa!*" he repeated over and over as he lay in his bed. "A *Shiksa!* Our Jakie should marry a *Shiksa!* God in heaven, why do you let me live to suffer like this?"

His white-haired wife, broken-hearted, tried to console him.

"What could you tell it from a name, Yosele? A name, it ain't nothing. Look—our Jakie he goes by the name Jack Robin. Amy Prentiss—it could be she's a *Yiddishe* girl. Look—Jenny Levy from Ludlow Street is her name on the stage Genevieve Leeds. Wait we should hear from Jakie some more."

"It's a *Shiksa*," her husband insisted. "If it was a *Yiddishe* girl, he would have written it in the letter. I feel it—I know it—it's a *Shiksa. Gott im Himmel*, help me to live out my last years!"

The next Tuesday evening Jack came unexpectedly. As he stepped into the spotless little flat, his father, who was sitting before the kitchen table in his shirt-sleeves, a skull-cap on his white head, reading loudly to himself from the *Mishna*, looked up mildly over his glasses and spoke the question he must have rehearsed scores of times to himself.

"To a *Shiksa* you're engaged, ain't it?"

Jack hesitated. The calmness of his father he sensed at once as being anything but indifference. He suddenly was swept with shame for not having thought more about what his engagement would mean to them.

The old man had turned back to the *Mishna*. Apparently, Jack's hesitation had replied adequately. And now his mother came into the kitchen from the narrow, dark corridor of the tenement. Jack kissed her wrinkled cheek. It was the first time in years that he had kissed her, and it thrilled the old woman. But in a moment she had observed the portentous absorption of her husband in his book of the Talmud.

"Yosele, don't you see our Jakie is here?"

The cantor continued with the low-murmured singsong as if he had not heard her. She turned to Jack, who gave her a queer smile and an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

"Then it's a *Shiksa?*" she whispered. Briskly she moved to the kitchen stove. "You'll stay for supper, Jakie?" she asked over her shoulder. "Sit down. I'll have it quick ready. The soup is already on the stove—*Borsht*, red-beets soup, Jakie—and to-night we got it cucumbers in sour cream, and cheese *Blintzes*, too."

The old cantor joined them at the table, but beyond the various ritual prayers he and Jack mumbled together, he did not utter a word. The old woman, pathetically striving to eke out some harmony from the situation, made not the slightest attempt to get Jack to talk of his *fiancée*.

"You are coming to the synagogue next Sabbath?"

"I'm sorry, ma. I'm going to be terribly busy. You see, this is my one big chance. Lee has been fine, and it's up to me to repay him. He's one of these men who doesn't do things half-way. Either he backs you to the limit or he drops you. He's watching me closely, and I have to prove I can be relied upon. He's not giving me a star part, but I'm a principal, and if I make a hit, I'll rise fast with David Lee. This is the first time, ma, that my future has meant anything to me, and I'm going to give all I have to rehearsals."

When the meal was cleared off the table, the old cantor moved with his tome to the smaller kitchen table, where he went on with his low-toned recitative of the Talmud. Jack and his mother sat in silence at the larger table. Then Jack placed his hand tenderly over hers.

"Ma, it's a funny thing, but I'm just beginning to appreciate what you and pa mean to me. I never realized it until suddenly last week. I——"

"Do you hear what our Jakie is saying, Yosele? He's saying that now he's grown up and he knows how good it is a papa and a mamma. He's saying——"

It was as if the old man had not heard

They talked on softly, rapidly at first, exchanging ideas and comments, and then peaceful silences crept between them. After a rather long pause in the talk, his mother said, with a casual air:

"You know, Jakie, I was just thinking the other day—I was thinking that if a *Yiddishe* girl marries a *Goyisher* boy, then it's bad, because you know how it is in a house—everything is like the father wants. But if a *Yiddisher* boy marries a *Goyishe* girl, then it ain't so terrible. She could be learned to buy *Kosher* meat and to have two kinds of dishes, for *Fleischige* and for *Milchige*—and the children could be brought up like *Yiddishe* children; they could be sent to a *Chaidar*—I was just thinking like this only yesterday, Jakie. Ain't it funny I should think of it?"

Jack's hand tightened over hers.

"You're sweet, ma," he said slowly. "I'm afraid it can't be. I was brought up that way, ma, and I've been unhappy all my life. And Amy was brought up the other way, and she's been happy from the day she was a baby. I'll want my children to be happy like Amy is."

The sharp sound of a book snapping shut twisted their attention to the cantor. He had risen, and, eyes, blazing, was pointing a shaking finger at Jack.

"Go out!" he cried. "Go out from my house—bum! Go!" A fit of coughing seized him, and he sank to his chair. They hastened to his side. The old man was unable to speak, but his eyes glared so that Jack stepped back. His mother turned, tragic-eyed, to him and said,

"Maybe you better go, Jakie."

There are few tasks more absorbing and exacting than that of rehearsing for the "Frivolities," and the days which followed for Jack were so full that he found time only to telephone his mother. As there was no connection directly to the flat on Hester Street, Jack had to call the drug store on the corner. He succeeded in getting her but twice in the five times he called. His father was well, she told him cheerfully, but naturally getting old and feeble. She doubted whether he would be able to continue as cantor for very many more years, but thanked God that he would be able to lead in the services for the coming holy day, Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement. "Maybe you will come to the synagogue then, and fast the whole day?" she asked wistfully.

"Ma, I don't see how I can possibly come. It's the fifteenth, and our show opens on Broadway the same evening. I—I'd give anything, ma, to be able to come. I'd do it for my own sake as well as for papa's and yours. It's beginning to mean something to me—Yom Kippur. You see how it is, don't you, ma?"

"Yes," his mother sighed; "I see."

The second time, she brought up the subject again.

"Your papa he's ain't feeling so good, Jakie. Maybe this will be his last Yom Kippur. He talks about you. He is all the time talking about you. He says God has punished him enough for his sins that he should be the last Rabinowitz in ten generations to sing *Chazonoth* in a *Shool*. He don't *say* you should come on Yom Kippur—he didn't talk about that. But I think in his heart he means it, Jakie."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, ma," he replied, after some thought. "We open Monday night, and there probably will be a lot of changes made in the special rehearsal on Tuesday. But I'll try to dodge that Tuesday rehearsal and come to the synagogue for the morning and most of the afternoon."

"You're a good boy, Jakie."

AMY, who had swung West on the vaudeville circuit, was in Denver at this time. Jack wrote her every day—love-letters, almost childish in their outpouring of longing, full of high resolve, glowing with the miracle of the new insight he felt he was getting into life.

I realize that with me it isn't a question of ability, but of character. I've seen enough of this show to believe that I can put my songs over so big that Lee will have to star me. But I must be unswervingly steady. I have to be as good at the end of the season as on the opening night. I have to be on hand all of the time. My health must be guarded as well as my impulses. I don't even want to miss a performance with illness as an excuse. I can see that some of them are a bit leery of me—they're not dead-sure they can depend on me. Lee is the only one who's different. He's like a rock. I'd rather break a leg than fail him. But your wonderful confidence and my own resolution make me smile at them. I know I'll come through.

Swiftly the last month of rehearsal went by, and then the great day came. At two Monday afternoon, David Lee, who had attended the dress-rehearsal, called a halt.

"That's all," he said. "Take it easy until to-night. Robin, I want to see you."

He took Jack aside in a corner of the shadowy theatre.

"You're a winner if you can come through. Not exactly a world-beater—Frank Binney and Hal Bolton and Eddie Loren and Helen Kennedy still have something you haven't got. I don't know what it is, but you have the *capacity* to get it. I've seen it show suddenly in talented performers, sometimes overnight. But you'll make the electric lights, and I'm behind you. Now beat it, and be sure to take it easy."

AT THREE in the afternoon, Jack, in his suite at the family hotel on Seventy-ninth Street, was busily writing a letter to Amy, who was in Salt Lake City. He had taken a hot bath, intending to sleep off some of his nervousness after this note to his sweetheart. He finished the letter and had just sunk beneath the covers of his bed when the telephone-bell rang. It was old Chiam Yudelson, friend and neighbor of his parents, to tell him that his father had just died.

When Jack's taxi-cab drew up before his home in Hester Street, a harassed policeman was swinging his club in the effort to disperse the crowd in front of the tenement where the beloved cantor lay dead. Jack elbowed his way through. He was recognized, and a pathway was instantly made for him.

In the tiny flat were his mother, the *Shamas* of the synagogue, old Chiam Yudelson and his wife, and Lawyer Feldman, the friend of all Hester Street. Greater perhaps than her grief at the loss of the man who had loved her and his God with equal fervor for sixty years was Mrs. Rabinowitz's panic at the thought that it was Yom Kippur eve and that the lyric voice of a Rabinowitz would not be raised in supplication to wipe out the sins of the Chosen People before their Creator. When Jack crowded his way through the friends and neighbors who packed the dark, narrow corridor, she was clinging to the hand of Lawyer Feldman.

"Look, Mr. Feldman," she was saying; "it's only two hours to Yom Kippur. It's got to be a good *Chazon* to sing. The last words my Yosele he said to me, he said, 'Rivka, get our Jakie.' So low he says it, Mr. Feldman, I couldn't hardly hear him. His face was white like a *Yahrzeit* candle, and he says to me: 'Rivka, God will forgive our Jakie if he will sing "*Kol Nidre*" for me to-night. Maybe my dying,' he says, 'will make a *Chazon* from our Jakie. Tell him, Rivka,' he says. Look, Mr. Feldman; Jakie is maybe coming here. Maybe you could talk to him. In his heart he's a good boy. Tell him—tell him—his father is dead—tell him—oh, Mr. Feldman, my heart is breaking in pieces—I—I can't talk no more——"

"Here's Jakie!" Chiam Yudelson broke in.

The next moment his mother was in his arms. Lawyer Feldman drew her gently away, and she turned into the other room—the bedroom where her dead husband lay. Silence followed. Nervously Jack went after her, fearing that silence.

It was an immaculately clean room—so clean that every rip in the wall-paper, every stain on the plastered ceiling stared at them, hollow-eyed, terrible in nakedness. The bed, a thing of iron tubing, whose green paint had long since scaled off, stood head against an ancient oak bookcase, crammed with old-fashioned mahogany-colored books of the Talmud, the *Chumesh*, the various prayer-books, and a mass of huge music portfolios filled with note-scribbled sheets. On the bed lay his father's body. It had been covered completely with a white sheet, but his mother, flung across it, had drawn the sheet off so that the waxlike face and one thin old shoulder were revealed. Jack looked long at his father's face. It was beautiful in death. Every line in it spoke of a brave, poetic fight, of deep, fierce religious faith. His mother's body shuddered, and Jack reached over to take her hand.

She rose from the bed then, and son and mother stood alone.

"I—I came as soon as I—heard," Jack said.

His mother's hand rested lightly against his coat.

"He—he died this morning. It was a quarter to twelve. Yesterday he got sick. He talked about you—all the time about you, Jakie. At a quarter to twelve he died—a quarter to twelve. He just closed his eyes — like a baby, Jakie — and he said—he said: 'Rivka,' he said, 'God will forgive our Jakie if he will sing "*Kol Nidre*" for me to-night. Maybe,' he said, 'maybe—maybe—' Oh, Jakie, I—Jakie, *mein Kind*, your father is dead—I can't stand it——"

She was again in his arms. Lawyer Feldman appeared in the doorway.

"Better take her out of that room," he suggested. "It isn't doing her any good. Has she spoken to you about——"

Jack nodded. He gently led his mother toward the kitchen. As they passed him, the lawyer asked in a low tone,

"Are you going to do it?"

Jack placed his mother in a chair, where she sat blankly, looking first at the friends gathered in the kitchen, then out of the window where the crowds were still pushing and surging noisily, and then, in a most pathetic and forlorn way, down at her hands folded so helplessly in her lap.

The *Shamas*, who was there, mainly for the purpose of finding out whether Jack would serve as cantor that evening and the next day or whether he would have to step into the breach himself, was becoming nervous and impatient. He approached Jack, who looked unseeingly at him.

It was four-thirty. If he appeared in the show that evening, singing ragtime songs while his father lay dead—while the Hester Street Synagogue went cantorless for the first Day of Atonement in forty years—while his mother struggled under an unbearable double grief——

He turned to the *Shamas*.

"My father's *Talis*, it is at the synagogue?"

"Yes; everything is in the *Shool*, Mr. Rabinowitz," the *Shamas* replied eagerly.

"The tunes—the *Genigen*—of the choir—are they the same my father used ten, fifteen years ago?"

"The same *Genigen*, exactly."

"All right. I'll be there at six o'clock."

As Jack took his mother in his arms to sit out the next hour with her and to comfort her, the tears for the first time since her husband died flowed from her eyes, and she said over and over to him:

"In your heart you're a good boy. I always told him that in your heart you're a good boy."

NEWS travels like lightning in the East Side. "Jack Robin—the vaudeville headliner—is singing as cantor at the Hester Street Synagogue this Yom Kippur!" It might have been a newspaper scare headline, for by six-thirty that evening the slowly arriving members of the Hester Street Synagogue congregation had almost to fight their way through the mob that packed the street up to the corners of both Norfolk and Essex Streets. Wealthy East Siders, who had paid their ten and twelve dollars for pews in the much larger Beth Medresh Hagadol, neglected that comparatively splendid house of prayer to stand in the crammed lobby of the Hester Street synagogue and listen to the golden notes of this young singer of ragtime as he rendered "*Kol Nidre*" with a high, broken sobbing which, they insisted critically, surpassed his father's in his best days.

Every twist and turn of his father's had been branded unforgetably in Jack's memory from childhood days, but he sang the grief-laden notes with a lyric passion that was distinctly his own. The low-hanging rafters of the old synagogue, the cheap, shiny chandeliers of painted gold, the faded velvet hangings on the holy vault where the parchments of the Old Testament stood, the gold-fringed, worn white-silk cloth that covered the stand in the pulpit where he prayed—these called to something surging and powerful in him, something which made his whole life since his boyhood seem blurred and unreal.

When, with the congregation standing and swaying in humility before their Creator, he uttered that refrain which asks forgiveness for every sin of mankind from evil thoughts to murder, rising from a low singsong into a quivering, majestic wail and then breaking into incoherent plaintiveness, the sobs choked his throat.

His mother sat in the small gallery at the back reserved for women, and he saw her when, after marching slowly forward with the choir, he had flung open the hangings before the holy vault and turned to face the congregation as he led in the appeal that the "prayers of this evening shall come before the Divine Presence in the morning and by nightfall bring redemption for all sins."

When he finished the high melodious strains of this triumphant yet humble and supplicating piece, there was a low murmur of approbation throughout the synagogue.

The rabbi, a rotund little man in the front pews, turned to his neighbor and remarked:

"Even Rosenblatt, when I heard him in Moscow, didn't give a '*Yaaleh*' like this. *Aza Singen nehmt by die Harz!*"

When the time came for *Kadish*, the prayer uttered only by those in mourning their dead, the whole congregation rose in silence in honor of the cantor who was dead and his son and wife. The other mourners subdued their customary loud recital, and the voices of Jack and his mother, the one flowing and resonant, the other high and broken with sobs, were heard clearly.

Crowds followed the couple as they slowly walked the half-block to the tenement-house that evening. As they paused on the stoop, Jack turned to the gathering people and in a low voice asked them to be good enough to leave his mother and himself alone with their grief. Instantly a cry was raised:

"Beat it!"

"Go home, bums, loafers! Ain't you got no respect for the *Chazon?*"

"G'wan! Can't you leave some peace be even on Yom Kippur—*Paskudniks!*"

The crowd dispersed.

Jack sat up until midnight that night with his mother, and then, completely weary, he fell asleep, to dream fitfully of Amy and of David Lee, of David Lee and of Amy, until morning.

DAVID LEE slept fitfully also that night. Jack's failure at the last moment to appear on the opening night had ruined three numbers and had made two others awkward, and Lee had a difficult job ahead of him in the next twenty-four hours. He wasted no time thinking about the delinquent. "*He's* going to do the worrying, not me," he said grimly to Harry Anthony. He stayed up until four in the morning, telephoning and telegraphing in the effort to get a substitute so much better than Jack that the reviews of Tuesday, probably derogatory, would be reversed on Wednesday morning.

His efforts did not meet with success, and he left word with his man to wake him early Tuesday. When his man called him, he asked for the morning papers.

He was about to turn to the theatrical page, when his eye was caught by a headline on the front sheet. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he read, and, as he read, a low whistle escaped him. He dropped the first paper and took another. He swore softly.

"That damn kid!" he murmured gleefully. "That damn kid! Stevens, tell Herman to have the car out in a half-hour."

He had to slip a crisp green bank-note into the hand of the policeman before room was made for him to stand in the crush in the narrow lobby of the Hester Street synagogue. Jack Robin, swathed in the folds of a great black-striped linen *Talis*, an elaborate and stiff black-plush skull-cap on his head, his thin, handsome face deadly white, his dark eyes afire, was singing that splendid aria of his father's—"*Hamelech*," "The King"—and as the majesty of it rolled forth, broke, and narrowed into rivulets of humility, David Lee pinched himself to see if he were asleep

Then, after a few moments of quick rattling recitative, Jack went on into a clear, low-toned series of sound which had the effect of musical talking, of superbly self-contained remonstrance. This speech gradually rose to a fluttering uncertainty, a bewildered pleading, and then the climax came—a flood of confession.

Excitedly Lee elbowed his way out of the crowd.

"Where's the nearest telephone?" he asked the policeman.

"Right on the corner—the drug store, sir."

In five minutes Harry Anthony was on the wire.

"Harry," said Lee, "do you want to hear the greatest ragtime singer in America in the making? A wonder, Harry, a wonder! Got Hal Bolton mopped off the boards. Come down right away. It's a dirty little hole down on the East Side called the Hester Street Synagogue. I'll meet you on the corner of Hester and Norfolk."

A flush rushed into her cheeks, the first he had seen there; it startled him, and her brown eyes, very wide, startled him also, and for a moment they sat there, staring at each other.

A Red-Blooded Love-Story Plus a Lesson for the Nation

FORAKER'S FOLLY

John Taylor Finds His Heart as Well as His Head Involved in the Unequal Struggle between Conserver and Destroyer

By Harold Titus

Illustrations by R. K. Ryland

IN THE Seventies of the last century there came to a man living in northern Michigan an idea born of a vision of coming necessity. His name was Foraker, and his foresight showed him the inevitable consequence of the ruthless felling of the pine forests for lumber. So he bought a denuded tract and started to raise new crops of timber, to be cut when ready for market. Nearly fifty years had passed; Foraker was long since dead, but his daughter Helen was resolutely carrying out her father's project. The first plantings were not yet ripe, and Helen—in debt and with only some swamp-land from which to get a living—was finding her burden increasing year by year.

But the girl was not discouraged. She was an expert in all matters relating to forestry, and "Foraker's Folly," as the tract of land was known throughout the countryside, occupied her heart and mind even to the exclusion of thoughts of love and marriage. Not that she was lacking in suitors. Milt Goddard, her foreman, foreseeing ultimate disaster and knowing of immediate trouble ahead, had urged her to marry him.

"No, Milt," she told him; "I wish you wouldn't. Love is a big, big thing; the forest is a big, big thing. I haven't time for more than one big job."

And then there was Sim Burns, a local politician, who was not only a suitor but a menace, owing to his relations with Jim Harris. Harris was attorney for the Chief Pontiac Power and Light Company, but he had organized the Harris Development Company as a private enterprise, and was getting rich selling land—and bad land at that, for it would not yield a living—to the deluded settlers who purchased it. Money was needed for the improvement of the property, such as roads and schools, but Harris had no idea of using his own capital for these purposes. The county must do it, and this meant increased taxation. Burns, who was a candidate for supervisor, had threatened Helen that, if she would not marry him, he would see, if he were elected, that her taxes were raised beyond the breaking-point.

Such was the situation when, one day, a motor breakdown forced John Taylor to ask the hospitality of Foraker's Folly for the night. Helen's immediate household consisted of Black Joe and his wife, Aunty May, who cared for two orphan children, Benny and Bessy, by arrangement with their legal guardian, Humphrey Bryant, who wanted to remove his charges from the influence of their only living relative, a dissipated youth.

Upon the errand which had brought young Taylor into the woods depended his future standing with his father and, in fact, his whole career. The old man had grown rich in the lumber business, but he had persistently cut down the forests until his vast tracts were nearly bare. With these gone, Luke felt that life held nothing more. He was determined that his son should tread no easy path to fortune, and had made him a present of some three hundred thousand feet of hardwood logs. This was his capital. He must show how he would use it.

John was forced to accept his father's proposition, although by so doing he had to give up all idea of an early marriage with Marcia Murray, who refused to take up the rough life of the lumber camps with him. And he must also leave behind Philip Rowe, his father's confidential man, who was not only, he feared, a competitor for Marcia's hand, but was, he believed, trying to prejudice his father against him.

From certain vague remarks made by old Luke and others, John already had an idea that it would be no easy job to get his logs out of the timber country, but the real extent of his difficulties was not borne in upon him until he had seen them for himself and heard their story from Helen Foraker. The trees had been felled under contract by a man named White, but an early melting of the snow had prevented their being hauled to the railroad, which was part of the contract. The woods being reported clear by the inspector, White had collected his money and disappeared, and the logs lay a tangled mass alongside a stream thirteen miles from the rails.

Luke had known this. When John discovered it, all his pride rose in resentment against the trick his father had played upon him. He was for abandoning the whole project and finding an easier and quicker way to make a beginning.

But Helen showed him a way out, and her courage put him to shame. By piling the hard lumber on rafts of cedar and hemlock, it could be floated to a mill, where it could be sawed. The plan was put in operation, and worked successfully from the first. Luke Taylor was both astonished and delighted to find that his boy was overcoming difficulties for which he himself had seen no practical solution.

John, meanwhile, had gone to live in the men's shanty at Foraker's Folly. It was not a congenial shelter for one brought up in luxury, but his sense of discomfort lessened with increasing enthusiasm for his work. To be near Helen and see her at work was sufficient incentive to put forth what was best in his nature and most forceful in his energy—and, besides, something was coming into his heart that was leaving no place for Marcia Murray.

LIVING as he did within the boundaries of Foraker's Folly, John Taylor's perspective was too close to yield a comprehensive picture of the whole.

He had heard the forest spoken of derisively in Pancake, had heard men of the crew who worked in it and about the mill talk disparagingly of the property. But these comments had been standardized, the voicing of ideas of long standing, and had been feeble generalizations. It was a foregone conclusion in the community that the project was the venture of a visionary and destined to fail. Most men found satisfaction in this belief, for long ago they or older men they respected had forecasted such a calamity.

Taylor knew that some of the pine was cut each winter, and that the trees taken out were not harvested for their own value but for the good their removal would do those that were left; cripples, the unthrifty or the light-gluttons, only were taken. Banks of these still flanked the mill which, before it began to saw the hardwood, was busy making these logs into thin box lumber and lath. Pulp-wood bolts had been shipped, he knew, and cars of small slabs and edgings for fuel. Of what was cut there was no waste.

He knew of the nursery behind the big house where seeds were taken from cones and planted, and the seedlings removed to long furrows, where they progressed a year before being transplanted to those places where trees were not thick enough on the ground. Black Joe had charge of the nursery, and John had watched him at his work evenings and in those days when he was not needed elsewhere, had heard the old fellow muttering to the baby pines as he fussed over them with pride and tenderness.

As the days grew fair and less rain fell, he learned of the fear of fire. Beside Helen's house Watch Pine reared itself, a great old tree, five feet through at the butt, rising straight and true for sixty feet before it flung its tattered banners to the air, a dignified veteran, standing above and guarding over that younger generation of its kind. Beneath the branches a crow's-nest had been built, and up the trunk was a stout ladder. On dry days some one was on watch there through the hours of daylight, scanning the forest and adjacent country with a glass for the smoke which would herald danger.

But these were high points of information, unrelated, largely meaningless.

It was a few days after his first cars of lumber had rolled out of the siding at Seven Mile that John came upon Sim Burns in the woods. The new supervisor was walking along a fire-line, note-book in hand, pacing carefully and counting trees, and did not see Taylor until they were close together.

"Hello, Mister Taylor!" he said in his harsh voice, and sniffed. "How are th' logs turnin' out?"'

Well enough, John said.

"Makin' up the tax-rolls," Burns volunteered. "Just lookin' over this piece. My goodness, but this property has been let off easy! Taxes on this'll come in handy for roads an' a new court-house."

"I suppose taxes on this stuff do run high."

"High! My goodness! She ain't paid *any*thing like she should have paid. You see, our county's been run by old men. They never came in here to make their valuation. They told Foraker when he started he couldn't grow timber as a crop; they've stuck to that idea. No progress, Mister Taylor; no progress.

"This piece's always been taxed just like waste land. Assessed for six dollars an acre last year, an' look at it"—with a wave of his long, dirty hand. "I'll bet this piece right here'll go twenty thousand to the acre right to-day!"

"No?"

"Sure! Ask anybody. An' six dollars an acre! My goodness! It's worth twenty-five dollars a thousand stumpage to any man. You ought to be interested, Mister Taylor, now that you're one of our tax-payers."

Indeed John was interested, but not because he owned forty acres of cut-over land in Blueberry County. He left Burns abruptly and went on, staring incredulously into the pine. Twenty-thousand to the acre, and twenty-five dollars a thousand stumpage!

There were ten thousand acres of pine here, he knew. Ten thousand times——

He gave a whistle of amazement. The figures mounted dizzily. He stopped dead still in his tracks. What a property!

And Helen was in a corner. He recalled the threat of taxation that Burns had made that first night, remembered Milt Goddard's prediction of failure the next morning, remembered, also, the girl's words as she told her foreman that the pinch was coming, that the hardest time was at hand for Foraker's Folly.

WHY not, he asked himself. She had helped him—this was a property to stir the most sluggish of imaginations. His imagination, his ambition were mounting. His paltry few logs would be sawed within three weeks—and then what?

He thought back to old Luke, of how he revered the Michigan forests which he had subdued; surely he had made his father see that he was not afraid to work, not above grubbing; as surely, he felt, his father would now stand ready to back him, would be as willing to help him as he had been ready to impose upon his helplessness with a cruel practical joke.

He walked on slowly, thinking, multiplying and losing his breath again before the ascending totals.

"It will help her, when she needs help," he told himself. "I don't know what she needs, just—but— And if I could help her, there'd be no obligation; and with no obligation I wouldn't feel small—and then, perhaps——"

He stopped thinking aloud as a flush came into his cheeks. In his eyes was a light of ambition which had nothing to do with trees and logs and dollars.

That evening John wrote a second letter to his father, longer, containing references to detail that he knew were intelligent references. The last paragraph read:

> By the way, how much backing would you give me if I could come to you with a chance to get behind several thousand acres of Michigan white pine that will go, say, twenty thousand to the acre?

He sent that letter to Pancake by Goddard, who took it with a surly nod; then John lighted his pipe and walked the river's bank to dream and see rising before him a future of incredible glory.

Little did he reckon the fires of avarice that would be lighted by what he had written, the thwarted impulses which would be touched to life again. Little did he dream of the misery that would follow in its wake, of the heart-sickness, the desperation, the regret. He could not see himself friendless, caught in a net of chicanery and ruthless plotting, with the joy of what he had put behind him this night as nothing beside the unhappiness that was to come.

IT WAS Sunday, on a clear, still July morning. The men's shanty was deserted, the mill silent, the teams at White's camp stamping lazily in the stable.

The world was a glory of vivid life. All about growth had replaced the dormant grayness which had prevailed when John Taylor arrived in the country. Out on the plains, July grass blades of heavy green had hidden the tufts of last season's dead stalks; brakes thrust their tender curled fronds through the moss, and sweet-fern and sedge, those useless growths of the barrens, were for a fortnight things of beauty. Aspens and birch were in tremulous leaf; oak and maple had burst from their maroon buds and flaunted polished foliage to the sun. Within the forest the pines were stirring; terminal buds had opened, and new, light needles were stretching for air and light. A company of birds made the somber shadows joyous, and the Blueberry, wandering through the forest, sped crystal-clear over golden sand or dark depths, reflecting the graceful ranks of spruce and balsam which edged it.

Over on the Au Sable, forty miles away, Marcia Murray and a dozen or more of Taylor's Detroit friends were gathered at Dick Mason's Windigo Lodge for one of the protracted house-parties which had given the place a name. John had half promised Marcia that he would be there for the first Sunday, but somehow his interest in her was steadily waning. He was unconscious of change until some necessity for decision brought it home to him, as on that first night when he had no interest in a letter to her, as on other nights which followed when he could write only of himself and his job, and on those rare occasions when he could not even bring out his writing-materials. A part of him believed that he was as eager to see her as he ever had been, but while he planned the trip across country he had half consciously sought an excuse which would keep him in the forest; and when a man who wanted his hemlock bark telephoned that he would come to the mill at Seven Mile soon, John interpreted that "soon" to suit his own strongest desires. He would wait over Sunday for the buyer, and all the time he secretly hoped the man would not show up, that he would have the day to himself—and that he might see something of Helen Foraker when her eyes were not on the men who worked for her and her mind not on her forest or his logs.

In such a subtle manner the change crept through him. He told himself that he was as fond of Marcia as ever, told himself that, but a voice deep in his heart soberly, steadily denied—and when on this Sabbath morning of gold and blue and green he thought of the Marcia he was not to see that day—slender, small, cool Marcia Murray—she seemed to him peculiarly unsatisfactory and inconsequential.

This was the first time he had not reacted to thought of her with at least a superficial thrill, and realization was something of a shock. He had come to the Blueberry to find easy money; he had chosen to discard the easy way and to help produce his own wealth. He had gone that far from the reasonable creature he had been, and he had gone as far, perhaps further, in his very impulses.

On the river-bank near the house, Helen sat with Benny and Bessy Kildare. Pauguk, freed from her kennel, was chained to a stump, nose between her paws, orange eyes on the face of her mistress as Helen talked to the children.

John approached slowly. The wolf-dog turned and muttered under her breath, throwing a venomous glance at him; but Helen was occupied with Benny and did not notice.

"Look!" she cried suddenly, indicating a flitting bird. "What is it?"

The boy looked sharply.

"Flycatcher," he said. "Olive-sided flycatcher"—very positive in tone, but his eyes searched hers with query.

"Are you sure? Listen!"

The bird had lighted in a tree and his

thin, plaintive "*see-a-wee*" floated out over the river. Benny laughed.

"Nope! Wood-pewee," he said, and showed confusion for his cocksureness of the moment before.

"And what does the olive flycatcher say?"

"This"—puckering his small lips and whistling a "*hip-pee-whee*." "Like the pipin' plover," he added, and laughed at her smiling nod of favor.

"There's another bird! See him, Benny?'

"He's easy! He's a flicker. An' there's a whisky-jack! See him lookin' for scraps?" He pointed excitedly to the jay near the kitchen door. "I seen a pine-finch to-day, too. I knowed him because he had yellow only on his wings an' tail."

"You *what?* And you *knowed!*"

"I *saw* him, and I *knew* him," Benny answered lowly, much abashed.

There was perspiration on his lip, and the hair about his temples was damp; the vigorous color of his cheeks was stained by the flush which followed her correction, and he swallowed with his small, soft throat in such a way that she leaned forward and dragged him close to her, stroking his head, laughing to cover the tenderness in her eyes.

Aunty May appeared in the doorway and called the children. Bessy started at once, waddling on her shapeless little legs, but the boy lingered and said:

"I try to learn the things you teach me, Aunt Helen. If I learn as much as you do, will you marry me when I grow up?"

"Oh, Benny, if you're as nice a man as you are a little boy, if you try to learn always, if you are as kind then as you are now, you'd make any girl happy."

"But you!"—slapping her knee insistently and looking into her face with a frown which told that he would not be put off. "Not *any* girl! *You!*"

"I'll be an old woman then. But if I should ever have a little girl, I don't know any boy I'd like to have her love except you."

Benny eyed her with sober skepticism a moment and started away complaining,

"But you won't ever *promise!*"

Taylor had approached, had overheard, and watched, struck by the quality that was in the girl's face and voice and manner as she talked with the child; a tenderness was there, a strength of maternal feeling that he had never seen reflected in the face of any girl before; perhaps it had been in others and escaped his notice, but as he stood there watching Benny disappear and listening to Helen's casual comment on the glory of the day, he was thinking this: That the face of Marcia Murray would never yield itself to a look like that.

HE SAT down beside her and drew lightly on his pipe. Against the far bank a trout was feeding, breaking the velvety surface of the pool by his frisky rises.

"So I'm not the only one who learns things from you," he said, watching for the fish. She laughed disparagingly and said something about having little to teach.

"Oh, no! Don't say that," he interrupted. "You have everything to teach children and—men. Do all boys who learn things from you want to marry you—when they've learned enough?"

She mistook his gravity for a form of banter and laughed in protest.

"Don't laugh," he said, and then, leaning forward impulsively, "Maybe I'm not so different from other boys who learn things from you—and want to learn more, so they——"

A flush rushed into her cheeks, the first he had seen there, the first time he had seen her unpoised; it startled him, and her brown eyes, very wide, fast on his, startled him also, and for a moment they sat there, staring at one another while words surged upward to the man's lips.

And then a house-wren, perched in a pine, tail erect over his back, began his breathless spring song; the notes poured from his throat fast and faster, liquid and mellow and infinitely lovely, and he twitched his tail and darted his small head and moved his feet on the branch as though the thing he had to say could not be stayed, as though he must cram those precious seconds with his love-making.

Helen looked away, and Taylor put the pipe-stem between his teeth, relaxing, confused by what he had said, confused as well by the love-song of the bird which had put into music the words that frothed to his lips and which he did not have the courage to speak—or the *right* to speak, he suddenly remembered, and stirred uncomfortably.

Embarrassment held them mute until

Pauguk, who had watched John ceaselessly, moved against her chain and muttered a threat.

"The men tell me you raised her from a pup," he said, because he felt that he must say something.

Helen stretched her hand toward the dog.

"She must have been a month old when I took her. A collie of ours went wild and disappeared and was gone a year; men kept telling my father that they had seen her with the last wolf that was left in this country. Father didn't believe it until we found her in one of Black Joe's traps. The puppy was by her; they'd been traveling, evidently.

"Joe killed the dog—she was very dangerous then—and brought the pup in to show us. They were all for killing her, but somehow the little thing, backed in a corner, ready to fight with its milk-teeth, seemed so pathetic and helpless and courageous that I couldn't let them. Besides, I thought it would be quite a triumph to make her my friend. It was—and a very hard job."

"You like to do the difficult things."

"Perhaps. That is vanity. Nothing that is easy seems worth while."

He watched the trout rising and smoked thoughtfully.

"Is that why you buried yourself here in this forest? Because it is hard?"

"I haven't buried myself. I belong to it; I'm a part of it."

"And you've never wanted anything else?"

"I've never had the time."

"It satisfied all your impulses?"

"No—not all. What aren't satisfied will have to wait—a while."

PAUSE. Helen's mind was not wholly on what she had been saying; the flush still lingered in her cheeks, and she did not look at Taylor. The pause grew to a moment of silence, and then, as though to overcome the confusion that he had put upon her, or as if fearful that he would commence again where the wren had ended, she began:

"My father used to say that want was entirely a matter of environment. This has been my environment; so I've never wanted anything very strongly that couldn't be had here. I was born here. I grew up along with the trees, though most of them had a big start on me. I never knew my mother; I never knew many people except my father and those few men who came here because they were interested in—my environment.

"I think my father would rather I'd been a boy. He never said that; he was very kind. But he trained me as he would have trained a boy. I ramble," she said, laughing and more at ease.

"No. Please tell me about him. I've been here so long, and I know nothing about this forest he started. I think your father must have been a remarkable man."

"He was—in lots of ways. When I knew him, though, his life revolved around one thing: this forest. Reforestation was a religion with him, land economics his theology. He infected everybody who came near him with that religion—that is, all who were intelligent enough to understand. I was down with the disease before I could wholly comprehend. I played with baby trees instead of dolls. I planted tiny forests of my own instead of keeping play house. I learned to fight fire before I learned to sew. I put in the years learning log-scales that most girls spend learning scales of a piano. When I could read, I read books on silviculture instead of romances. I knew more about chemistry than I did about clothes, more about soil than I did about—boys.

"You see, we were a sort of joke in this community and had to be quite self-sufficient. After I was more than a little girl, we stayed here always because we were too poor to get out. The first years took all my father's money; then came debt, and he was very conscientious. We never went anywhere to meet people; they came here—teachers of forestry, foresters from Europe. And then, when my father died, I didn't have time to feel the shock or to be lonely. The responsibility all came on me then. So the other things I might want to do have had to wait."

"A big burden!"

She shook her head.

"Not a burden, unless the urge to paint a great picture or write a great book is a burden. It's something bigger than you are; one is helpless before a job that must be done."

"But now that you've put it over——"

"Put it over? Oh, no!"—shaking her head slowly. "No; not yet."

"You have grown a forest."

"That's only a part. It is all Foraker's Folly for most people, and the end is to make all people understand that Foolish Foraker was not foolish."

"I see," he said vaguely.

"Are you sure that you do?" Pause. "I'm not. You're too young"—flushing slightly again—"in experience, I mean. You're only weeks old in this; some men are life-old in the same experience and they won't see. It's not this tract, not these few thousand acres my father wanted men to see. It's something else; he wanted to show what all this land might be that they call waste land, that they look on as a burden and an eyesore. Those plains down the river are useless now; they are a burden, and horrible to look at. It's not the fault of the land; it's the fault of men."

She sat up and her manner became a bit more vehement.

"Did you see Louvain?"

"No. But I got to Rheims."

"Do you see any parallel? No—of course you don't. You don't see the heel of the Hun on these pine barrens. You don't visualize the devestator, the leveler of all that was useful and beautiful.

"Oh, we were Prussians, we Americans! We were ruthless, heedless. All we saw was forests and a market for their products; so we butchered. We had an eye only for the hour, a thought only for personal gain. It wasn't the conscious Prussian, the individual destroyer; it was the Hun in our hearts, the spirit of the age—thoughtless youth, my father used to say. Our pine went out to build the country where cheap lumber for cities was needed. They stripped the forests so a country might grow, just as the Prussian needed to grow and would grow quickly at the cost of his own future, even."

Taylor watched her closely, and she saw the bewilderment in his face.

"Your father cut millions of feet of this pine; he bought it and paid for it, and his energy made it into homes. But it was his fortune that was made, too, and it was his men who left these barrens behind; and their children are living in a country spotted with great areas of waste land and it's his grandchildren who will face a timber famine.

"Do you know that in Michigan there are millions of acres which are considered useless for all time? And not only in Michigan, but in all the Lake states, in New England, in the South, in the West.

"There's over a quarter-billion acres of land that once grew forest which now lie idle between the two oceans. A lot of it can never be farmed or grazed. But in that lies our national future.

"Logs, lumber, forest products are the very foundations of national life. Ties for railroads, and charcoal to make the iron that goes into equipment; timbers for the mines that yield coal for the locomotives and metals for every use. The shoes you wear were probably tanned with oak bark. Your necktie is silk, probably artificial silk, made from spruce pulp. The cloth in your coat was woven on wooden looms with a dogwood shuttle; the pencil in your coat pocket is made of Tennessee juniper, likely, and the note-book behind it came from northern spruce and balsam."

SHE watched a swamp-sparrow perch for a moment on the telephone-wire near her house.

"Take the telephone: Again your mine-timbers to get the copper, the converter-poles in the smelter where the ore was reduced, the poles under the wires, the paper round the wires in the underground cables of your own city; the wooden desk for the instrument, the turpentine in its varnish, and even the rubber mouthpiece you talk into and the rubber receiver you squeeze against your ear came from trees!

"Civilization can hardly make a move without touching forest products, and our forests are going and we're doing nothing with our millions of acres of idle land that once grew timber!

"This land that is waste is waste in the worst sense. It won't grow food-crops, it won't fatten cattle or sheep, but it will grow timber!" She waved her hand down-stream toward the miles of desolation that stretched between them and Pancake.

"And while we are turning our backs on it, our supply of wood is shutting down. National forests? They're remote; much of their area is inaccessible. They give us only three per cent. of the timber we consume. The men who own virgin forest are butchering, and have a leg to stand on because there are other men like Sim Burns using taxation as a goad.

"We've torn down and we have not rebuilt. We can build, and that was my father's idea—to show that we can create as fast as we destroy.

"Less than fifty years ago this land he bought was stripped of its pine; to-day it is maturing another crop. The same could have been done with any piece that grew good trees; just keep the fire out, and nature would have done much in time. But we were so greedy, looking so much toward to-morrow instead of toward the next generation, that we wouldn't even give nature a chance, and now there isn't time. Fire, fire, fire, without end! Every summer it eats across this plains country; every summer it does its damage on cut-over lands in all the timber states. It not only destroys trees but it takest he seed-bearers and the seeds that lie ready to sprout and the life of the soil itself.

"To exist as a nation we must have forests; to have forests all we need to do for a beginning is to give this worthless land a chance; we can speed up its work by helping, by keeping out fire, by planting trees, by good forest practise. Can't you see all these Michigan plains growing pine again? And in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New England, the South? And everywhere where hills and valleys have become blackened eyesores? Don't you see what it would mean to people, not only in cheaper homes and steel and railroads but something else? Birds and flowers and the things we are forgetting. It is so simple to do; to show people that it is simple is such a task!"

She stopped with a smile, and Taylor rapped the ash from his pipe.

"That's a headful," he said soberly.

HELEN drew a deep breath. "I'm glad I don't bore you," she said. "There are few people who will listen, few who realize their dependence on forests."

"But they must listen to you now. You've succeeded."

She shook her head.

"There are trees, yes; but think what it has cost to grow them!"

"Cost? Of course it cost, but you began with such little capital. Your land must have been so cheap."

She shrugged. "My father was impractical. His first costs were away higher than necessary. Compounding interest will double the investment in your land every ten years, remember. Some years it has cost nearly fifty cents an acre to keep the fires out, and there] are ten thousand acres of pine here. We have almost a hundred miles of fire-lines that cost a lot of money, and those are only the big items. There's replanting and a hundred other things. For twenty years there was no income except from the scattering Norway pine which wasn't good enough to take when the first loggers went through here. After twenty years the trees were beginning to crowd and slowing down growth, but thinning cost money and there was no return from it then. Meanwhile, debts piled up and interest went marching on.

"The value of stumpage went marching on, too, which saved us. It is high now; lumber is higher than it will be six months from now, but it won't drop back to stay where it was before the war. Never again, because the forests aren't here. The cut of Southern pine has passed its peak—did ten years ago; it will dwindle, and then all America has left will be the forests of the Pacific Northwest. Enough there to last forever? No. They said that of New England; they said that of Pennsylvania and New York; they said it of the Lake states. Your father must have said it: that there was enough pine in Michigan to last forever. All those men believed that except my father. And when they'd cut thirty years there was no Lake-state pine, so they went South, where they thought there was enough to last forever—and those forests will go out with our generation.

"In the woods when a saw-gang has cut into a tree until it begins to sag and snap, they stand back and cry, 'Timber!' It is the warning cry of the woods; it means that trees are coming down, that men within range should stand clear. My father used to say that the cry of 'Timber!' was ringing in the country's ears, that the loggers had given the warning, that the last of our trees were beginning to fall. But we haven't heard. Our ears are shut; our backs are turned, and unless we look sharp we'll be caught!"

She paused a moment and lifted a hand and let it fall.

"We're caught now," she said. "It's too late to get enough in time to avoid the hurt.

There will be a shortage; there is now over great regions, and it will be worse before you and I have lived a normal lifetime in spite of all that men can do. A few years more of doing nothing and the pinch will hurt—*hurt*, John Taylor!

"We can make good a grain shortage in less than a year; we can overcome a meat shortage in three or four seasons, but you can't hurry timber. It needs fifty to a hundred years to reproduce itself, and nothing that men know about can hurry it—and men are doing nothing adequate now, this year, this spring, this morning!"

Taylor had a flashing memory of old Luke, staring at a white moon through the plume of a yellow pine, a counterfeit pine, longing for Michigan forests again, hopeless and cynical. And he looked at this girl, sitting up cross-legged now, gazing up the river, cheeks glowing, eyes far away, and he remembered that Humphrey Bryant had said of her—that in her heart was something of Joan of Arc, of Catherine of Russia, and something of the Blessed Damosel.

She looked back at him and went on:

"That has helped my forest—the available supply pinching down. We've got along somehow with box lumber and lath and pulp-wood from our thinnings, but the pinch is coming and we are not ready to cut now. We could cut, we could make money; but it would prove only half the argument.

"My father's whole object was to get his capital turning its full interest-return each year and then to take that interest while maintaining the capital—not eating it up, not making the forest a temporary property. It's in the waiting period now, just as a fruit-grower is with a young orchard. The fruit-grower realizes on the increasing bearing area of his trees; we realize on the quality growth of these pines and the climbing lumber values.

"Foraker's Folly is at the turning-point. The value of the standing timber is beginning to overtake the interest which has been compounding away all these years, but neither the timber nor the investment is quite ripe. To cut now would be to overcut the rate of growth, but in a few years—a very few years—we can harvest a part of what is here, and that part will about equal the growth on the rest of the tract; it will take care of all the investment, cover all these years of compounding interest, and show that the forest is a sound, going, money-making venture, that it can go on forever, that there will always be something to cut, that there will always be white pine here, that there never will be useless red-oak brush and gnarled poplar, blackened snags, lifeless soil.

"That is what my father started to prove, and they called him Foolish Foraker—and I loved my father; I believe in him—and I want men to believe in him as I do!"

SHE stopped, breathing rapidly. Taylor was thrilled, stirred by her enthusiasm.

"A terrible load for you!" he muttered. "Why—why doesn't the state do this?"

She smiled tolerantly.

"My father used to say that, in the history of civilization, every proper function of the state has followed individual enterprise. The state is thick-headed. It is the individual who lightens burdens, the individual who blazes the way that states may follow. And as for Lansing!" She laughed sadly. "Waste land has meant only a page of tabulated figures to most men there. And, at that, Michigan is doing more to grow timber than all but a few states."

"And how much longer," he asked, "will you have to carry on?"

She shook her head rather wearily.

"That depends on markets, on demand. Three, four, maybe a half-dozen years."

"But what about Sim Burns?"

A shadow fell across her features.

"I don't know. Humphrey Bryant is the rock on which I've stood in trouble. He has worked for years to change the timber-tax laws so that ideas like this won't have the life squeezed out of them. He has worked—he is still working. Without him there would be no chance. Oh, for the present, anyhow, I'm at their mercy!" She said that rather desperately and rose abruptly, as though the fact excited her. "But we'll try to keep on; we'll try to keep going."

Actual weariness was upon her, and he saw that her mouth drooped and that her eyes were troubled.

She took Pauguk back to her kennel, and Taylor started away through the forest.

Until dark he walked and came out at the mill, ate with Raymer, the mill foreman, smoked and started back through the night and the forest.

The gash of the fire-line let down the light from an avenue of stars to give the road beneath his feet a grayness in the midst of the flat black which was all about. No individual trees were discernible; here and there against the sky could be seen motionless reaches of tufted limbs, but on either side the pine was an unbroken wall, silent, motionless.

And yet, as he went through it, that forest seemed to have the powers of speech and motion, for Helen Foraker had breathed life into it that day for him.

It was an eery feeling which enveloped him there, alone in the gloom and the silence. He felt like an intruder, like an unwelcome stranger—and small, mean, low-spirited. He, the seeker after possessions, after honest possessions, won by his own skill and effort, felt mean, because that day he had realized that he had not even sensed the example that had been all about him for weeks, had dragged it down to the level of his feeble appreciation, had thought and spoken of it in his own feeble terms.

Foraker's Folly to-night represented something that had never entered his ken—an ideal beyond material gain, no matter how heroically won. Not once in her talk had Helen spoken of what it meant to her in wealth, in profit. It was an adventure in practical creation for the sake of building, designed for the benefit of no individual, developed for those who were not yet born and for their children of all time. He had been aware of men and women who had struggled unselfishly that others might find living easier; but those people had always worked among men, had stood in range of the public eye, had been of cities, of great, spectacular movements. But here, lost in this country which had been laid waste, a girl, backed only by an aged politician and a group of laborers, carried on her fight, ridiculed, unattended, that homes might be built and cities might grow, that a forest might yield and renew itself for all time.

Taylor felt as small as he had felt before Helen when he first entered her house, a searcher for an easy road to fortune. He had come far; he had done the thing which astonished even his exacting father, but that was to-night as nothing. Sight had been given him, and his emulation was roused not by a personal triumph but by the thought that perhaps it lay in his power to help carry on this forest—the forest which had become emblematic of all that is most worthy. It was fundamental; it stood next to the supply of food; it was a bulwark against privation and insurance of national life itself.

He stopped at a juncture of fire-lines and looked at the stars. The Dipper hung above him, and the northern lights, shooting their green spires far toward the zenith, moved behind the tree-tops, setting the stanch banners of pine in bold silhouette.

"I wanted to help because it meant profit for me," he said in a thin, awed voice. "Profit for me—and to open the way for more profit— But, no longer—not now!"

He watched the spires of restless light creep up and upward, sweeping in from right and left, seeming to come from east and west as well as from beneath the north star until they converged above his head, forming a cone, tremulous and fading swiftly.

"And, Marcia"—he shook his head, and one knee gave suddenly—"I can't keep my promise—unless you can find happiness with me." He started on slowly, but his pace grew rapid, and within half a mile of the men's shanty he burst out,

"God, Marcia—I don't want to make *you* happy—any more!"

WINDIGO LODGE is a huge, rambling building of logs, high on a bluff overlooking the south branch of the Au Sable. Great chimneys of boulders flank the structure; a wide veranda runs about three sides, screened and furnished in wicker with those refinements which are not native to the plains country—luxurious swinging seats, lounges, winged rockers, tea-wagons and wicker flower-baskets.

Inside is one great main room for lounging and eating. A fireplace fills one end; bright rugs are on the floor; a piano with its floor-lamp is in one corner; there are shelves of books and wide window-seats; electric lights are about the walls and glow from beneath lamp-shades on tables, and from the center of the beamed ceiling hangs the massive root of a cedar tree, polished expertly, and each of the twoscore root-prongs holds its small frosted light-bulb.

A girl in riding-breeches played the piano, and three couples danced with abandon to the primitive measure. At the far end of the room a table of bridge occupied four others. Mrs. Mason, Dick's mother, read in a corner, unmindful of sounds or movement.

Only one of the gay party was alone. Marcia Murray sat in a rocker on the veranda, tapping the concrete floor nervously with a small pump, staring with sullen eyes toward the river.

It had been a difficult day for her, the culmination of weeks which had been beset with increasing perplexities. Soon after her return to Detroit from Florida, she had dropped an occasional word, to be carried by curious minds to meet other words that John Taylor had dropped, and it was not long before her best girl friends came to her with those hopeful kisses and smiles which are designed to provoke confidence.

But Marcia had made no actual response to their advances because those perplexing factors had begun to present themselves to her in John's letters before the gossips had got very far into her affairs; but she let it be known that there might be something to say—before very long.

She knew that they were watching her at this house-party as they had never had the opportunity of watching before; they listened to her every word, remembered her every action; for the snaring of the heir to the Taylor millions was a matter of no small importance. To heighten this curiosity, John had not appeared, though he was only forty miles away. At heart Marcia was worried and petulant and suspicious from the first day of her arrival, but she sparred alertly before the others, letting them know little, for her pride was as great as some of her other qualities.

But her hope that he would spend this first Sunday with her had been too high for hiding. She had let them become aware that she expected him, and when he did not come she knew that they detected her dismay, try as she did to cover it.

After dinner she went to her room, begging a headache, and was aware that lifted eyebrows and a smirk or so and perhaps a cautious "I thought as much" followed her. She opened a bag, took out John's letters and read them slowly, carefully, weighing words, reading again and again his references to the Foraker pine and to the girl who owned it. He was very enthusiastic over the forest—but of Helen he said little—much too little.

Marcia's cheeks became flushed, and that cool calculation which was characteristic of her eyes gave way to a mean temper. She was not nice to behold as she sat on the floor, reading those letters.

After that, she lay down, stretching her slim legs and throwing her arms wide, staring at the ceiling, thinking—thinking. She slept a few moments and moaned once or twice lightly. When she awakened, she opened her door and listened; it was quiet below; most of the others were gone. She went down and sat at a desk and wrote a lengthy letter, a bright, light, charming letter, completed with much pains and deliberation and some rewriting.

The letter was for Philip Rowe.

SHE kept her front of gaiety very well thereafter until darkness, when the others found agreeable diversion; but she did not care for cards or dancing, and reading was out of the question, so she slipped outside and sat alone, watching the night, brooding, planning—with temper in her eyes again.

It was there Fan Huston found her. Fan was thirty, married at twenty-two, childless, given to tightly drawn hair-nets, much rice powder, stiff gowns and personal difficulties. She went in for trouble as some women go in for surgery and some men for the collecting of stamps or obsolete firearms. She came to the door, saw Marcia, looked cautiously about to see that her husband was occupied with a girl in a yellow sweater and came swiftly across the veranda, drawing a chair to Marcia's.

The girl looked up with a casual word, but the turn of her head exposed her worried face to the revealing shaft of light. Fan said nothing for a moment, but took Marcia's hand in hers and squeezed it significantly.

"I understand, Marcia dear," she said lowly. The girl bit her lip and turned her face away and made as if to withdraw her hand, but Fan leaned nearer. "Now, don't think I'm butting in. I understand, and there isn't a bit of use thinking that you can keep me from helping you. It's a shame, and I'm here to say so. If John Taylor had come over to-day, I was prepared to take the first chance and give him a generous piece of my mind—and make him like it."

Her brittle voice vibrated indignation, and that quality met a need in Marcia's heart. Taylor's growing indifference had given her the feel of a jilted woman; she had been helplessly furious at the serene interest these other women took in her misfortune. But she had not yet reached the point of storming against the shabby treatment John had given her, and that is the specific which brings relief to the feminine heart when all else has failed.

"You know that you can trust me, dear," Fan was saying. "You've been very sweet through it all, but you couldn't keep it from Fanny. I know; I've been through it and I've helped others through it, and I can't help telling you that you're going too far, taking too much from John. It's a downright shame that he should treat a girl like you this way; but you're a little goose to put up with it. You have the right of every woman to protect her pride, and if you don't exercise that right, he may—*walk* on you, dear."

Marcia's hand, which had lain rather tentatively in Fan's, moved, and its fingers twined with the older woman's. Fan lowered her voice and went on. Later they walked, arm in arm, up and down the terrace before the house, and Marcia cried a bit and steadied and grew indignant.

Before they went in they stood looking at the play of northern lights.

"You would do that?" Marcia asked, in the pause.

"Positively, I would! I wouldn't let a day go by. If there should be any other girl——"

"Oh, there isn't! I'm sure he isn't interested in Miss Foraker." There were limits to which Marcia could go even in that sympathetic company, and her pride prompted that lie. "It's—it's just that he's so wrapped up in his business."

"Well, in either case"—Fan was not quite convinced, it seemed—"the best way to bring him to time is to go there, have it out."

Marcia watched the bank of light on the horizon throw out a fresh fringe of pale green.

"Miss Foraker has asked me to come," she lied again. "I might— Yes; I think you're right. I could drive over—to-morrow——"

Fan patted her hand. "*That's* the girl! Don't be *too* abrupt with him, but just have everything clearly understood. Of course, I know your feeling for John, but I can't help remarking as Dr. Mason remarked to Dick yesterday when the big trout went through his tackle: there are several big ones left in the stream yet. And if I were you, Marcia dear, I'd wear that blue sport suit."

MILT GODDARD returned from Pancake that night bringing letters for Taylor. Sitting on the deacon's bench in the men's shanty, John opened them. One was from his father. The address was typewritten, but within was a scant page of Luke's scrawl. It had been years since the old man touched pen to paper for his son.

> You are crazy to talk of that much pine. It can't be done. Don't believe everything they tell you up there just because you're a gullible cub. I'm sending Rowe to Pancake Monday night just to see how big a fool you are. Your mother is well. Yours, etc., L. TAYLOR.

John breathed deeply and smiled and scratched his head and reread the crabbed sentences. Beneath their crustiness was a genuine interest, a willingness—after Luke's manner—to take him seriously at last.

Yesterday he would have tried to calculate the profit that might accrue to him from Luke Taylor's aid; to-night he saw in that note only a promise that the burden on Helen Foraker's shoulders would be lightened. She had helped him; she had shaped him; she had taught him, and now, perhaps, he could repay some of that obligation. He could not know what waited just over the horizon of time.

The other letter was in a smudged, scrawled envelope, addressed in pencil and posted in Pancake. He opened it absently. The message had been written in pencil on rough tablet-paper. It read:

> John Taylor Sir Well are you going to settel or will i have to seu you My damages is not Grate but unless i am paid 1000$ I will law you out of the county. Yrs respy. CHAS STUMP esq.

He frowned over this. Goddard came in and he showed it to him. Milt laughed in the superior manner he had adopted toward Taylor, but condescended to say:

"Miss Foraker has a stack of 'em a foot high. Everybody who comes here from outside or anybody who has any property here gets these from Charley. He'll be around to see you."

Taylor had not been at the mill an hour the next morning when Charley Stump appeared, pushing his safety beside him, that guilty look in his watery eyes.

"Hello, Mister Taylor!" he said, halting at a distance.

"Hello, Charley!"

"Fine weather, ain't it?"

"Right!"

John was copying from a tally-sheet and paid no more attention to the old man until he had finished. Then he turned and looked squarely at him. Charley's hand caressed the bent handle-bar and his old eyes shifted uneasily.

"Your logs is turnin' out good, Mister Taylor."

"Fairly well."

"That's fine. You like it here, Mister Taylor?"

"You bet, Charley!"

"Well — that's good" — falteringly, as though he had started to say something else.

"Was there something you wanted to say to me, Charley?"

"Oh, no; I just dropped by to see your logs. I'd been over sooner only I ain't got my tires yet"—pointing at the rope-bound rims.

John walked away smiling—Charley was so meek and casual after his threat.

IT WAS mid-afternoon when Helen, driving her Ford home from Pancake, saw a pea-green roadster attempt to swing into the road from one of the lesser trails which came in from the north. The car was driven by a girl, and both car and driver were out of place there. The motor bellowed; the sand flew from the rear wheels; spinning tires ate through the sod hub-deep into the earth and stopped.

Helen swung her car out of the road, ran round a stump, over a half-rotted log and stopped in the road again beyond the big car.

Marcia Murray was out, looking petulantly at the plight of her car when Helen came up.

"They call these roads!" she said bitterly. "All day long I've been wandering over these plains and trying to get right directions. How you people manage to get about is more than I understand."

Helen stooped to see better the position of the rear wheels.

"We drive light cars," she said simply, "and we get used to these roads." She looked at Marcia, immaculate, blond, flushed, with fury in her eyes. "Where were you going?"

"To Pancake. How far is it from here?"

"About eleven miles."

"Are you sure?"

"No."

Marcia sniffed.

"You're the first person I've met to-day who wasn't sure, so perhaps you are right."

Her haughty manner did not impress this girl in the khaki skirt and laced boots, Marcia perceived. She experienced misgiving as though this other disapproved of her and as though that disapproval mattered. She was not accustomed to being made uncomfortable by the opinions of strangers. The flush in her face mounted as she watched Helen, who had dropped to her knees to look under the stalled car.

"You're in deep, but I think I can get you out."

"You can get help?"

"I could, but it isn't necessary. Let me take a pull on your car."

"With that?"—looking disdainfully at the rattletrap roadster.

"Yes."

Helen went to her car and came back with a shovel. She did not look at Marcia and said nothing, and this further nettled the girl. She stood back, however, smoothing the skirt over her hips, and watched Helen shovel sand and turf from about the rear wheels. She did the work quickly and without any immoderate effort or awkwardness.

"There"—drawing off her gloves and shaking sand from them. "Now we'll try."

A rope was forthcoming from the box on her car. She backed in close and then made it fast.

"Start your motor," she said. "I think the two of us can manage it."

The engines sputtered; the gear of the Ford whined; the slack came out of the rope; the big car bellowed; both sets of driving-wheels tore at the earth, and the heavy car crawled forward, following the smaller between stumps and around through the brakes until it was again in the road.

"You're not headed for Pancake now," Helen said, when the motors stopped. "It's the other way, but you can turn around if you're careful not to cut through the sod."

"You'll let me pay for this, of course."

Marcia produced her purse, but Helen would not accept money, though Marcia was insistent.

"Well, it was very kind of you, anyhow. You'll take my thanks, won't you? Perhaps the person I'm looking for is not just in Pancake; that is his address, but there's a mill somewhere near here?"

"Yes; on a little further."

"I'm looking for a Mr. Taylor. Do you know of him?"

Helen eyed Marcia with a new interest.

"I'm working for Mr. Taylor, and I am going to talk with him as soon as I get home. He will be at my house."

"Oh"—rather slowly—"how much further is that?"

"Not far. If you want to, you can follow me."

"That's very kind of you"—icily.

Marcia was appraising this woman now, as her identity seeped into understanding, and the personal inadequacy she had felt gave way to its sister emotion, resentment. It was with this girl John was working; it was to her he had referred with such significant repression in his letters. Marcia's flush came back as the pea-green roadster followed the rattling Ford over the swells and into Foraker's Folly.

At the door of her own house, Helen stopped and got down.

"I have some things to look after," she said. "Mr. Taylor is in there, or will be shortly. Won't you go in?"

Marcia's "Thanks" was curt. She ran up the steps, breath quickening, and paused with her hand on the knob and watched Helen join Black Joe and move toward the nursery. Then she opened the door and stood looking in.

John was at Helen's desk, loose papers about him, lumber quotations clipped from a Detroit newspaper propped against a book, figuring on a pad of blank paper. He had heard the approach of Helen's noisy car; he had not heard the soft breathing of the big roadster, so when the door opened he believed it was Helen returning and did not look up at once, but only grunted an abstracted greeting. When no step sounded he raised his eyes.

For a moment he sat in motionless amazement, and then his pencil dropped to the blotter.

"Marcia!" he cried, and there was in the word a ring of gladness which was eloquent as he beheld the trim girl, cool and clean and representative of all that had been desirable—a few short weeks before. "Marcia!" Amazement was there as he rose slowly, bewildered at seeing her there. He stepped about the corner of the desk, moved toward her and stopped. "Marcia?" A faltering question, reflecting all the doubt, a crystallizing of all the change that had come into his heart, a troubled echo of the truth that had come to him last night as he stood alone under the pines.

FOR a moment they were so, a dozen feet apart, the man's face a study in conflicts, the girl's intent, alert, as it pried and probed with the incisiveness of her kind.

"John?" she said in a low voice. "John?"

He moved forward and she put out both hands to him, her eyes questioning before the calculation which flickered in their depths. He took her hands and halted. Just that—took her hands in his and stopped.

They stood, and he felt her tremble.

"John—aren't you going to—kiss me?" Her voice was exquisite pathos mingled with fright and misgiving—fright and misgiving which were well balanced, almost too well balanced.

He released one of her hands and his fell to his side limply.

"No, Marcia"—shaking his head slowly—"I'm not—to-day."

She drew back then, a hand at her throat.

"John? John! You aren't glad to see me?"—in a breathless whisper; and then, voice mounting to an uncertain cry: "John! What is it?"

He turned away, thrusting his hands into his pockets, staring gloomily through a window.

"A mistake," he muttered.

"Mistake?" she whispered.

"Yes; a ghastly, miserable mistake!" he cried, facing her again, throwing his hands wide. "I'm at fault, Marcia. The blame in it rests on me. I've been selfish, indecisive. I've changed and said nothing to you to indicate change. If you hadn't come here to-day, I might have come to you with this confession—or I might have let matters drift—I don't know."

HE SWALLOWED dryly and looked down at her. She seemed smaller than ever, seemed more lovely, more fragile than she ever had before; her blue eyes were wide with fright and her lips parted in bewilderment—and that bewilderment was genuine. His brows drew together with the pain of hurting her, but the change of weeks had come to this rushing conclusion and there could be no evasion, no hedging, no more delay.

"I was honest enough with you in the beginning," he went on. "I'll ask that for myself—credit for being sincere. I was off my head about you; I was ready to promise anything to you, ready to do anything for you—and I was wrong."

His voice dropped and he let his hands, which had been lifted, drop, too.

"Wrong?" she asked. "Just where? Just how?" Her voice was a bit steadier; that amazement was going from her face; a glint of craft was there.

"In everything—from you to saw-logs."

Her eyes narrowed just perceptibly.

"And what have I done?" she asked. "What—to make this difference?" She was steeled as though her question invited accusation.

He shook his head.

"That's the devil of it; you've done nothing." She stirred, as in relief. "It's all on me, Marcia." He did not see the leap of triumph in her eyes or the settling of her mouth. "I—made love to you and promised many things—which I can't fulfil."

The girl stepped forward quickly.

"John, there's some terrible misunderstanding here," she said hurriedly, resting a hand on his arm. "You frighten me, but I know it's a misunderstanding." She pressed a hand against her lips as though to crowd back a sob, but her cool, clear eyes showed no distress.

"You're miserable; you're making a mountain of—nothing. There has been some good reason for your—for what might seem to other people like your neglect of me. I know." She waited a moment, and when he did not look at her, shook his arm gently. "Everything has been going so splendidly for you, dear. Your father can't keep his pride to himself. He tells everybody about you. He's ready to help you—the world is before you, John—Promises?" She laughed nervously. "The only promise you made me was happiness, and that happiness is yours to give me—for the asking!"

She paused, smiling wistfully, and Taylor looked down at her again.

"No, Marcia; I can't give you the happiness you want," he said evenly. A flicker of hostility showed in her eyes. "There's such a difference between the happiness that you wanted and the happiness that— I'm not the John Taylor I was when I left you"—very earnestly. "I've changed in the things I want and respect, and because of that I've changed in almost every thought and impulse. I couldn't help this change if I wanted to. I'm not trying to crawl out of a mighty uncomfortable position; I'm telling you facts. The John Taylor who came up here started to make a fortune for you, to give you happiness in the terms of possessions that you could see and touch. That isn't possible any more. I can't do that—even after I've promised to do it——

"I didn't come to Windigo yesterday because I knew that some such thing as this would have to be said, though I didn't admit it even to myself until last night—and I didn't want to hurt you. I've tried to hide from the fact that the next time we saw each other—I'd have to ask you to—cancel our contract——"

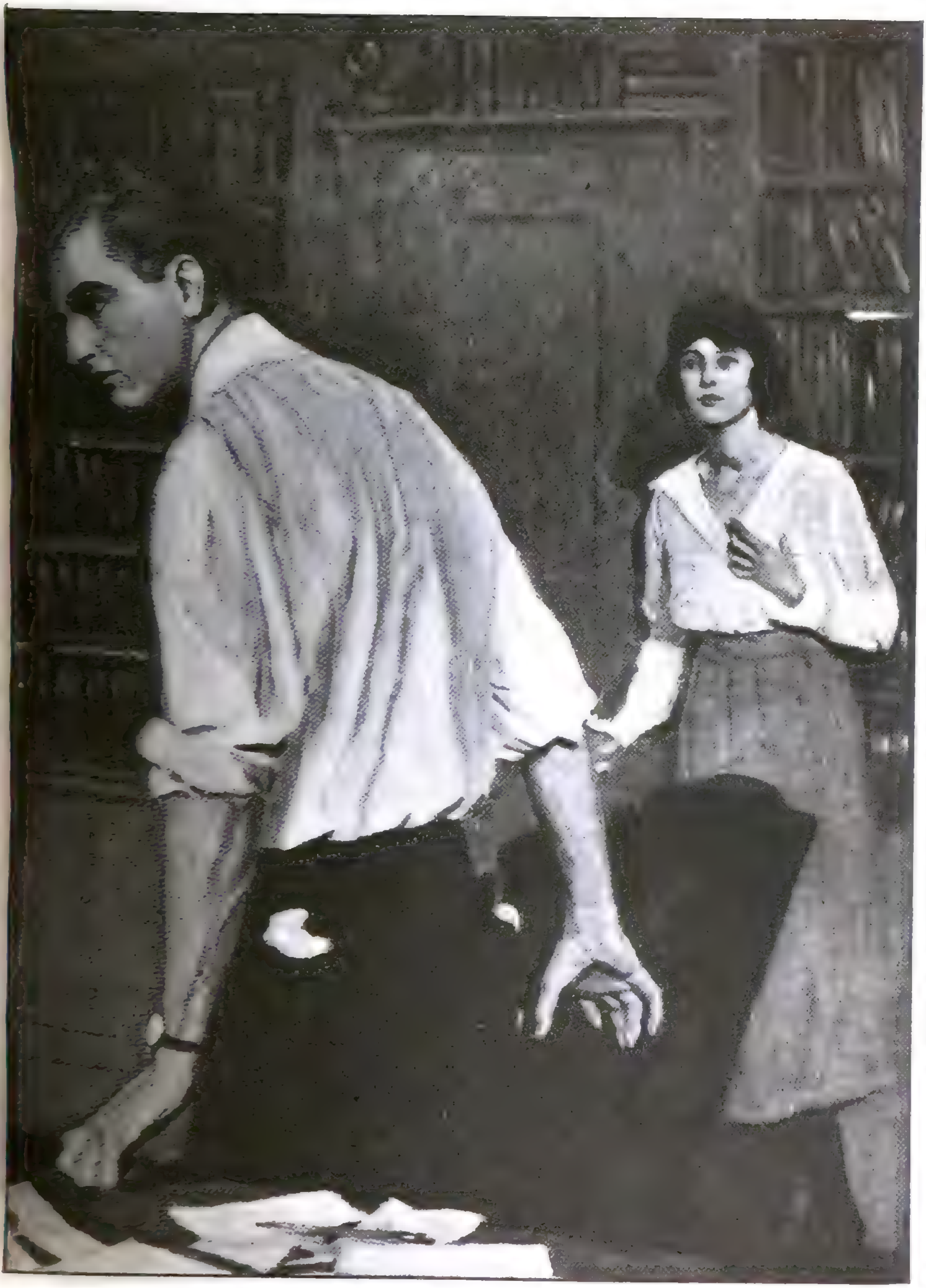
"I don't understand, John," she said coolly, and drew back.

"I hardly understand myself. I don't want to make money, Marcia. I would like to have money, but I've lost all interest in starting out to make a fortune as a first objective—and for myself."

"No one wants money; they want what it will buy."

"Not even that"—shaking his head. "I—I'd like to do a little something for a lot of people. I'd like to be of a little

Helen started to withdraw, but Marcia checked her. "Don't go," she said, and laughed. "Ther
"Wait!" John said sharply. "You haven't answered m



isn't place for two of us in this room, it seems. I'm going—to make room for you, Miss Foraker." Under those conditions, what would you have said?"

service, I think. I'd like to put my mind and body and what little money I may be able to get from my father behind an idea which is going to count for many people—not just for me. I'd like to put in the best years of my life—just doing that."

"Go on; you're becoming interesting"—with a tinge of irony.

"You see, I have my chance to do that in this forest, this pine. I've written you about it. You won't understand if I try to tell you all, but I'll say just this: it's an adventure in putting back into the hands of men the forests that men took away. I told you about Thad Parker's wife—you've seen this country. My father helped make the Jim Harrises and the Thad Parkers possible; he helped to lay waste this country and did nothing to put back what he had taken away from its children. I used to believe that my father's fortune was something for me to use. I never considered the fact that the devestation which made that fortune worked a hardship on any one else. I've come to understand that now, and I've come to think that maybe the job before me is to undo some of the damage my father did—to put back some of the things he took away.

"He wouldn't understand that, of course. It would make him furious. No matter. He won't have to know; but I'm going to ask him to help me do just that job. I won't put it in such terms, but I won't deceive him. I can't promise him any great profit; I can't even promise him his money back. I don't know yet how much I will need; but I want him to take a chance with me, and I think he will. He is sending Phil Rowe to Pancake to look it up, and he'll be here to-night."

"And what has this to do with me?"

THERE was defiance in the movement of Marcia's head, and John looked at her rather startled by her evident wrath.

"Only this—that I can't offer you anything of what you want."

"And what else?" She waited. "That I'm—no longer satisfactory?"

"Please don't put it that way!" he begged. His voice trembled and his face was drawn with suffering—because he hurt her. "We wouldn't have anything in common, Marcia; I couldn't give you what you wanted—and with you unhappy, where would I find happiness? It would be wretched for both of us. Don't you see that?"

"Yes, I see," she said, and laughed again. She drew off her gloves nervously, with anger showing in the sharp little jerks of her hands. "You've changed, yes! And because you have changed, you assume the right to make me ridiculous in the eyes of my friends and make me suffer."

"Oh, Marcia——"

"You're not dumb, John Taylor! This isn't any sudden change in you; there's nothing spontaneous about it; it's deliberate and planned, and I am—the deluded virgin." He tried to interrupt, but she stormed on, voice unsteady. "That is what it amounts to. You made love to me furiously; you were extravagant in your promises. I believed, and promised to be your wife. You have it in your power to make good those promises, but you have forgotten that I and others may think that you owe something to me regardless of—this change in you. Wait a minute! I'm not through." Taylor dropped his hands limply and listened. "All my closest friends, all your best friends, those who know the most about us, those who had our confidence, knew that I had given my word to marry you. They talk about you before me and gush over the way you have developed when all they want to know is why you've changed in your attitude toward me—the cats! They held up all their plans yesterday to see if you would come, and when you didn't, they tried to say that they were sorry, when I knew that they felt that it served me right for trusting you at all.

"There's another thing: How it affects me, here"—a hand on her breast. "I put my trust in you; you made a solemn compact and now, on a whim, you ditch me—because you don't want to make money! Because you want to become a sort of evangelist, you begin by trampling a girl's heart and making her a laughing-stock—Have you no pride, John Taylor? Have you no shame?"

Her questions stung like the bite of a lash. He could not know what went on in her cool little mind, could not know the meanness of her own heart at that moment. For him, who believed he had known women, Marcia had been worthy of his trust; for him she had been sweet and gentle, honest and without guile. He could not know of the nights she had been with Phil Rowe, playing him, holding him at once aloof and her prisoner; he could not guess the tensity and intelligence with which she had followed the varying favor of old Luke. He could not know the secret plans she had made in heartlessness and mercenary calculation, the deceptions she had practised, could not know the scorn she had for the first manhood and idealism that ventured into his letters. But this he could see and know: that instead of hurting this girl he had stirred a terrible temper; that instead of crying out to him in suffering she talked to him of her position, of what he could do for her if he would.

"I have pride, Marcia; I have shame. I have too much pride to lie to myself, to go through with this bargain which was to have meant happiness. Now—I could never bring you happiness. It is better to see failure ahead than to walk blindly into it. By foresight—there is perhaps chance of another start.

"Shame? Yes; I have shame! The only greater shame that could come to me would come if I dodged this thing to-day—and went through with something infamous."

He moved forward, not quite steadily, and towered over her, looking into her face. For a breathless moment they stood silent, giving one another stare for stare.

"I have changed, and you have changed, Marcia. I—I never thought you had claws. I was prepared to break your heart to-day—and pay the penalty to my own conscience, all because of my mistake. I paid that penalty, here in this room, only a moment ago. I suffered as I never thought a man could suffer because I was acting the cad, because I thought I was—hurting you.

"There's one thing I want to ask you, and I want you to be as honest with me as I have been with you. If I had come to Windigo yesterday, if I had told you that I could never bring fortune, if I had asked you to keep your promise under those circumstances, would you have taken me?"

She did not answer. She tried to tear her eyes away from his, tried to move, but she was helpless in the grip of his earnestness.

A door opened, and Helen Foraker stepped into the room, saw them, and halted in surprise.

"Please excuse me," she begged. "I thought you had gone out."

She started to withdraw, but Marcia checked her.

"Don't go," she said, and laughed. She began drawing on a glove, covering the white, well-shaped, well-tended hands. "There isn't place for two of us in this room, it seems. I'm going—to make room for you, Miss Foraker."

She drew back, and her eyes ran the length of Taylor's body, resting on his face with a blaze of fury. Her lip curled over her even teeth as she said,

"This, I suppose, may be the ending of the first lesson."

She turned toward the door.

"Wait!" he said sharply, and caught her wrist, swinging her about to face him. "You haven't answered me. Under those conditions, what would you have said?"

"What would I have said?" She laughed, with the laugh of a victor. "Why, you poor fool, I'd have laughed in your face!"

THE screen door banged behind her. As she jumped to the seat of the roadster, he stood looking after her, arms limp at his side, breath quick. The motor started; the car backed and swung and, with a bellow as of contemptuous rage, it struck into the road which led out of the forest.

John turned slowly toward the doorway in which Helen had appeared. She was gone; the door closed. He stared blankly at it.

"Fooled!" he muttered. "So—*I* was the dupe! It wasn't the man—but what he could give!" He put a hand over his eyes and laughed weakly. "And I humbled myself—I crawled on my belly— But by God"—hand dropping from his eyes—"I went through with it! I didn't hedge!"

He stared again at the closed door through which Helen had come to see and through which she had gone again. He stepped forward a half-dozen quick strides.

"Helen!" he cried. "Helen!" And stopped and waited. No reply, and he breathed again. "No—not now," he said. "Lord, no! Not now— Not the chance of another mistake!"

The next instalment of "Foraker's Folly"—in February EVERYBODY'S, out January 14th—finds Helen Foraker in the last ditch, fighting for that to which she has dedicated her life.

That Lovely Bounder

Just as Many of Us Prefer the Amateur Athlete to the Professional, so We Prefer the Amateur Sleuth in Fiction to the Professional—the Element of Real Surprise Is More Likely to Be Present. The Author Has a Sparkling Mystery Story Here—a Mystery Plus Humor

By Walter De Leon

IT WAS midnight, precisely, when I entered my rooms in the hotel, jaded, by Jove! Exhausting day. No sooner the door closed than the telephone-bell jangled. A man's voice sputtered in my ear, "Mr. Cyril Van Puhr Fishe?"

"All except the pronunciation," I corrected. "The 'e' is silent. What else have you to say before I seek the downy?"

"If I were you, Mr. Fishe, I shouldn't go to bed."

"Lay you a fiver you would," I bid.

"On the contrary, I'd catch the first train leaving New York. It would save a deal of unpleasantness. Bradley Ransome was murdered this evening."

Frightful jolt. "Not murdered!"

"Yes. In his apartment. The police don't know of it—yet. You'd better get away before they learn of the fight you and Ransome had this afternoon. Just a friendly word of warning. Good-by."

Bradley Ransome, the millionaire, the uncle of Gloria Trask, killed! "Oh, I say, Van, old boy," I told myself; "something should be done!"

Of course the first thing was to administer a bit of Scotch to my nerves. Odious things—nerves. On their account I'd come to America. My governor deals in gold-mining properties scattered over a majority of the uncivilized earth. There was a sort of merger—working agreement, I think—he wished to consolidate with Bradley Ransome's office in New York. So when his partner and barristers and counselors sailed from London with the papers, the governor sent me along.

I'd gone nearly everywhere else without a particle of improvement resulting. I was a hopeless case. You see, there was nothing the matter with me—nothing, at least, the army plumbers could place their fingers or scalpels on. The facts were ordinary. One day the industrious Jerries dumped a 5.9 in front of our dugout at St. Hilaire. The Big Show was in the hands of the diplomats when they discharged me from the hospital. "Fit as a fiddle," they said. Utter rot. I knew better. Nerves! No interest in anything. I couldn't concentrate. "Shell-shock," Surgeon Sir George Bartfield told the governor. "He needs shaking out of it." Jolly liar. I didn't dare risk excitement, only too infernally certain that I'd fly to bits under pressure. No confidence, you see. After six months of it there seemed nothing left but to drag the dreary carcass on forever, half asleep. Dismal prospect. What?

And then, in New York, I'd met Gloria Trask, the most fascinating, diminutive bit of very positively delicious femininity possible to conceive. Really. I'd always been rather content with my height and weight till the first time I entertained Gloria, her mother and Bradley Ransome. By Jove! Walking to the table in the café, with her bobbing blissful ringlets not reaching my shoulder by four inches, I felt like a hulking rough ostrich swanking beside a dainty, fastidious dove. Mentally, also.

I'd given her no peace whatever with motor drives, theatres and that sort of nonsense, which Gloria herself didn't appear in the least to mind. Ransome had been no-end nice, also, but Mrs. Trask—oh, courteous and well bred and hospitable enough, but totally indifferent. However, for the past week or more neither she nor Ransome had taken the remotest pains to conceal the fact that they had grown cooler—very. To be exact—arctic. Only the day previously, Gloria's uncle had stated with—I thought—unnecessary bluntness his disapproval of Anglo-American matrimonial alliances.

You see, I'd happened to mention to them that in spite of Gloria's twenty-odd enticing refusals, I had a gaudy marriage-license thing stored away against the time she should become wearied of my persistence and, as it were, succumb.

And now some beast had done in the poor old chap! That very afternoon I'd gone to his office to learn specifically his objections to my attentions to Gloria. He told me without a particle of hesitancy. Some of the things he said were beyond rude. Entirely forgetting my nerves, I got the wind up and talked back to him. In three minutes we had a proper show going, shouting at each other, knocking about the furniture and brandishing fists like a pair of ruddy costermongers. Secretaries and whatnot finally shunted me into the lift, exuding all sorts of threats and piffle.

A turn about the park had somewhat quieted me, and toward nine o'clock I'd dropped in on Gloria, intending to tell her of the affair. Mrs. Trask retired with the headache she usually acquired upon my arrival, and after a deal of persuasion Gloria consented to accompany me to a cinema theatre. All through the evening I'd endeavored to broach the subject of the quarrel, but couldn't contrive to lead up to it. The closest I came was my twenty-fourth proposal, which Gloria answered with the ease acquired of constant practise.

"Van, old chap," I again warned myself, after applying the Scotch, "some one should be notified; some one should——"

A peremptory tap on the door interrupted.

"Turn the knob," I invited. A short, tubby, bow-legged little duffer with a round fat face bobbed in.

"I'm Sergeant of Detectives Lovely," he introduced himself.

"Rotten name for a chap like you, isn't it?" I said. "Happy to meet you, of course."

He popped his little black eyes on me.

"What did you do with the gun?"

"Which gun?"

"Yours."

"Left it in London," I replied. "Before you go, will you have a nip of Scotch, Sergeant—er, what did you say your humorous name was?"

"Lovely. Never mind about the Scotch. My car's waiting. Let's get over to Ransome's."

"Oh, you've heard about it, then?" I said, picking up my hat and top-coat. "Did the same chap 'phone you?"

"What chap?"

"The chap who advised me to board the first train leaving the city."

I'D SCARCELY concluded telling him of my row with poor old Ransome when we pulled up in front of his apartment-dwelling. An ambulance was standing at the curb. A young surgeon, before swinging on, said softly to Lovely: "Neck-wound. They haven't found the revolver as yet. Ransome is in a bad way, after lying on the floor without attention for over three hours. I don't think he'll last till we get him to the hospital."

We went up to the old gentleman's library, in charge of two uniformed bobbies. The room seemed in shipshape order; there was no evidence of a struggle or confusion except the sorry stain on the rug near the large desk. The door of the small wall safe in one corner of the room was ajar, but the contents had not been greatly disturbed, if, indeed, at all.

Lovely assembled the house employees and closely questioned them. Not one of them gave him tuppence worth of useful information. None of them had heard the shot. The lad who manipulated the lift swore he'd let no one off on Ransome's floor except the elderly couple who leased the apartment opposite. The switchboard operator, who knew Mr. Ransome was at home, had had her suspicions aroused when he failed to answer the summons of a telegraph messenger who brought a telegram at a quarter to twelve. She it was who called in the police.

"And now for you, Mr. Cyril Van Puhr Fishe," barked Lovely, seating himself in the big desk chair and glaring at me.

"I don't so greatly fancy your tone of voice, old chap," I replied. "If you don't mind——"

"I beg your pardon," he interrupted civilly enough. "This is an interesting case. Every crime has a motive. Why was Bradley Ransome shot? Unfortunately I know little or nothing of the man. How much of a family has he?"

"Sister and niece," I answered. "She doesn't seem any too keen about marrying me."

"The sister?"

"My word, no! The daughter—the niece, Miss Gloria Trask. I asked her again this evening."

"What time—when?"

"Just before the comic film was put on."

"What's her address?"

"I never can remember it. It's the fourth house from the corner. Hold on!" I remembered that I had her telephone address somewhere and commenced searching my pockets. "This will be a terrific blow to her. She's the sole heir, you know."

"What's that?" The sergeant sat forward on the edge of his chair.

"Restrain yourself," I cautioned. "Of course, Mrs. Trask comes in for a share, but the bulk of the estate will go to the girl."

"And you want to marry her?"

"Wrong; I'm determined to."

"What theatre did you attend this evening?"

"I don't remember."

"What was the title of the picture you saw?"

"Something about— By Jove, I don't know! It was one of those peculiar society affairs with *décolletée* gowns, a shabby butler and a blond blackmailer who used the wrong fork with her fish."

"Wonderful memory you have—for certain things," Lovely complimented. "Did you or the girl mention the name of the theatre to Mrs. Trask or any one else?"

"No."

"Let's look over the facts you've stated. You and Ransome had a serious altercation this afternoon—over his niece. It became so serious that his employees were forced to kick you out of his office."

"Not kicked, really; persuaded. Perhaps even slightly pushed, but not kicked." The fellow's fidgeting and boorishness were rapidly getting my cork."

"Very well. After that, you and the sole heir to his millions slip out of her house and spend the evening together, though you are unable to recall just where. During that time some one attempts to murder Ransome. Have I stated things correctly?"

"Absolutely."

Lovely glanced queerly at me. "I should have told you that you aren't compelled to answer questions which might tend to incriminate yourself," he added.

After he'd asked to be put through on Gloria's wire, a horrid suspicion arose in me that he'd meant something by that last remark. The longer I thought of what had been said the more convinced I became that I'd made a proper ass of myself. Not only on my own part, but I'd placed Gloria in a tremendously compromising light.

"See here, Sergeant—" I began. He waved his hand to silence me.

"Miss Trask? This is Detective-Sergeant Lovely. If you will tell me where to call, I'll send a car for you immediately. It is very necessary that you come to your uncle's apartment. The number of your residence? . . . Thank you."

HE SENT one of the bobbies away and then said to me: "Don't tell me anything more until Miss Trask arrives. I'm going to see what I can find here."

Restlessly moving about, his beady eyes snapping and sparkling, he swiftly and comprehensively examined every article of any description he chanced on. The papers stuck on a steel-spike affair on the desk, the drawers of the desk, the safe and its contents, even the tin cash-boxes and letter-files, the scraps in the waste-basket—nothing escaped him. Seating himself again at the desk, he peered into a small waistcoat-pocket memorandum-book, bound in red leather, which he had taken from a drawer. I heard him whistle shortly, sharply, as one sometimes does in astonishment.

"What was the code Ransome used, do you know?" he asked me.

"Code?" I crossed to the desk. The

note-book was partially filled with the Christian names of women, followed by several capital letters. For example, on the first page:

Agnes S. TINT—QUI
Pearl N. GONG—ROS
Hazel W. DIED—ERM

The Hazel W. entry had a line of erasure drawn through it. And casually glancing at the opposite page, I noticed that there was also a line drawn through a similar entry:

Hazel W. NONO—PIT

"What do you suppose is the meaning, if any?" I asked.

Without replying, Lovely jerked a check-book from a desk drawer and opened it. Quite evidently it was a new one, as there had been not over a half-dozen checks torn from their stubs. But fancy my surprise when I saw that the sums of the checks, instead of appearing on the stubs in figures, were indicated by capital letters. The first stub was written:

No. 115. March 31.
To Amer. Realty Co.
(rent aptmt)
$TOG.— —

Lovely convulsively pointed to the next stub:

No. 116 March 31
To Cash
(acc. Hazel W.)
$EP.— —

"Hazel W. again!" snorted the detective, positively panting with his strange emotions.

Check 117 was payable to the telephone company. But even I gasped a bit of a gasp when I saw the next check, drawn that very morning:

No. 118 Apr 3.
To self
$OP,— — —. — —

It needed no beady eyes or bald pate to deduce that Ransome had withdrawn from the bank a sum mounting into five figures!

"How much money did you find in the safe?" I inquired.

"One hundred and fifty-four dollars," he answered. He tossed the note-book to me. "Find the last Hazel W. entry, please, and show it to me."

"You think——"

He interrupted irritably: "I *know*. Those are the telephone-numbers of his lady friends, written in code. The first four letters—DIED, GONG and TINT—are his code-letters for the numbers. The last three letters are abbreviations of telephone exchanges.

"The Hazel W. entry in the red note-book has been changed four or five times. Do you know what that means? No; you wouldn't. I'll explain. It means that Ransome kept in touch with her no matter how often she moved. She was a *particular* friend of his." Lovely emphasized his meaning by pointing to the stub in the check-book with the lady's name on it. "Hazel W.," he muttered. "Got to find her. Maybe she's the other woman in the case."

"The *other* woman," I echoed. "I say; you don't seriously connect Miss Trask with—" A loud knock on the door interrupted me. An officer entered. "You wanted to see Miss Trask, Sergeant?"

"You stay here," Lovely ordered, blinking furiously at me. "*I'll* tell her what's happened." He left the room.

WHEN he returned with Gloria, I was completely amazed at the girl. By Jove, what a thoroughbred she was to carry the shock and grief of the whole messy affair in the manner she did! She had a small black turban thing snuggled down over her glorious curly brown hair. There was a blue-ribbony du-dad on it, perfectly matching her eyes, which until that moment I had never seen without the merriest sort of an intimate twinkle in them. She wore a tailored something, molded lightly to her petite, softly rounded figure; there were slashes in the skirt and jacket of a crimson color which tried desperately to match the rubiness of her curving lips, except that for the moment the curves were straightened into a none too firm line that brought a throbbing dulness and a sort of puffy chokiness in my—I mean to say, my throat ached.

She looked so slim, so appealing and yet so competent—the set of her square little chin helped along that impression. At any rate, I decided she might as well know the worst at once and then rely on me.

"Gloria," I burbled, grasping her hand, "I've been all sorts of a nincompoop. I've let slip enough to this detective johnny so he suspects me of being implicated in the murder of your uncle!"

"I didn't say I suspected you," the sergeant contradicted. "I'm more interested in Miss Trask."

By Jove, he did suspect Gloria! "But you can't!" I protested. "Miss Trask was with me all evening."

"She was? *All* evening? What time did you call at her house?"

"Nine o'clock."

"The surgeon thinks Ransome was shot between eight and eight-thirty." The little rotter's manner of delivering such bits was positively devastating. He took a letter from the steel-spike thing on the desk. "Miss Trask, did you come here to see your uncle to-night before or after Mr. Fishe called at your residence?"

"Neither. I have not been in this apartment for several days."

"But you intended to come here this evening, didn't you?"

"No, sir."

"Explain this, then, if possible." He gave the letter to Gloria. It bore the date of the day before.

> Dearest Uncle Brad:
> I will surely be in to see you about eight o'clock to-morrow—Thursday—evening to get the money I've asked you for. Gloria.

My word! Damaging! What?

"What have you to say now?" Lovely snapped.

"Gloria, my dear," I interposed, "through a slight oversight, Sergeant Lovely has neglected to inform you that you are not compelled to answer any question which might tend to incriminate you."

Gloria flashed toward me a glance full of meaning, which I was altogether unable to interpret. "I did not write this note, Sergeant. It is not my hand-writing." She looked at it again with an uneasy start. The writing had appeared a trifle familiar to me, I'd thought. I examined it again.

"Oh, I say; that's *my* handwriting!" I burst out.

"Yours!" squealed Lovely. "So *you* wrote this note?"

"Not at all," I told him. "It's my writing, but I didn't write it. No use asking me to explain, because I can't." Both of them stared at me curiously. Uncomfortable? Rather.

"Sit down," Lovely said slowly. He started to draw closer to the desk a large upholstered-in-leather armchair for Gloria. Suddenly he pounced upon some object on the seat of the chair. It was a hairpin, an ordinary bronze-wire hairpin of the sort women use habitually.

LOVELY glanced covertly at Gloria. "Allow me, Miss Trask," he said, extending the pin toward her. Which seemed silly, because she hadn't been near the chair since she'd come in. She couldn't have dropped it unless—in that instant I saw the trap the detective had laid. He thought she had lost the pin earlier in the evening! Before I could warn her to disclaim it, she calmly took it from the detective.

"Thank you," she said. "I— Why, this is not mine."

"How do you know?" Lovely whipped out the words.

Gloria modestly extracted a pin from her ravishing locks.

"I use *black* pins."

Lovely compared the two bits of wire.

"Of course," he muttered, talking more to himself than us. "Blondes use gold hairpins, brunettes black, and red-headed women use bronze pins. Red-headed women!" He whirled on Gloria. "The maid, the servant who takes care of this room, is she red-headed?"

"No, sir. My uncle had but one servant, a Japanese."

"A Jap? Where is he?"

"Uncle Brad discharged him this morning."

Lovely jumped out of his chair.

"Discharged him—fired the Jap! Why didn't you tell me this before?" he shouted.

"You didn't ask me, sir," Gloria answered.

"Bravo!" I cried, delighted to hear her check the little bounder so neatly.

The sergeant looked at me queerly.

"You—you realize this is a murder case we're working on, don't you?" he asked, rather plaintively, I thought. "Miss Trask, will you be good enough to tell me the name of the valet, his address and the cause of his dismissal?"

"Tusho Kibidiri is his name. I don't

know his address; my uncle's address has been his for over ten years. Tusho called at our house this afternoon and told my mother that he and Uncle Brad had had a disagreement this morning, during which uncle lost his temper and dismissed him."

"Did he say what the disagreement was over?"

"Yes, sir. It was a question of money."

Lovely's roving eyes focused on the safe.

"Did the Jap know the combination of this safe?"

"I'm not sure. I think—I shouldn't care to say."

"While talking to your mother, did he make any threats?"

"I don't know. Mother told me, however, that he was quite excited and angry."

And then, before another word could be spoken, the bobby stationed in the hallway stuck his head inside the door.

"Sergeant, there's a guy out here, a Jap; says his name is Tusho. He wants to come in."

NO SOONER did Tusho enter the room than he scurried to the safe and rummaged its contents.

"What become bad-luck twenty thousand dollars?" he demanded.

"What twenty thousand?" Lovely countered.

"Misto Ransome, he draw twenty thousand dollar from bank this morning. I tell him bad day for draw money. Plenty bad-luck signs. He tell me I damn fool. I tell him he damn fool, not me. He say: 'Shut up. I *promised* this money to-night.' I say, 'You be sorry.' He get very angry. I get very angry. Then he tell me get out and stay out."

"Did Mr. Ransome say to whom he'd promised the money?"

"No, sir. He not say. But I think—I think he give to Hazel."

By Jove! Clean out of the blue! Lovely's eyes popped in and out distressingly and his hands twitched annoyingly.

"Hazel? What's her last name?"

"I no know."

"Do you know her address?" The Jap shook his head. "Have you ever seen her?"

"Two, maybe three times."

"Has she red hair?"

"Yes. Plenty much red hair."

"Tusho"— the detective tensed like a good hunting dog elevating his moist nose—I mean to say, pointing into a thicket—"when was the last time you saw Hazel?"

"I think last Saturday. Mr. Ransome not home. She give me envelope to give him. When Mr. Ransome get it he not like it."

Lovely leaped from his chair, bounded to the safe and selected a letter from a number held together with an elastic hand.

"Is this it?"

"Piece of newspaper inside?" questioned the Jap.

"Yes."

"I think it look like one Miss Hazel give me," Tusho decided.

Lovely removed a note and a news clipping from the envelope and spread the former face up on the table. The clipping he held in his hand. There was neither superscription nor date on the note, which had very evidently been hurriedly done.

> The enclosed came in a letter from O. this morning. O. himself arrives to-night. Be careful. He was always insanely jealous of you. When he finds how you have helped me—I don't like to think about it. H.

Lovely put Tusho in charge of the bobby in the hallway, and leaned over the desk toward Gloria. "Miss Trask, the clipping I hold in my hand has a Deer Lodge, Montana, date-line. It states that among the prisoners released from the penitentiary two weeks ago was Oscar Winchell. Does that mean anything to you?"

"No, sir."

"Um. Let me quote. 'Oscar Winchell, the forger and embezzler, whose peculations ten years ago nearly wrecked the Gloria Mine Company.'"

"Gloria Mine Company!" burst from me involuntarily. "That's the property my governor is so eager to buy a controlling interest in. He's determined to have it."

"One of your uncle's companies?" quickly asked Lovely of Gloria.

"Yes, sir. It—it was named after me."

"Do you hold any of the stock?"

"N-no, sir. But I get the dividends. For my eighteenth-birthday present Uncle Brad arranged to turn over to me the income from the fifty-one per cent. of the stock he owned in the mine."

"But he retained the actual stock?"

"Yes, sir."

Lovely squirmed in his chair like a bally schoolboy. "Let me quote again: 'Winchell managed to slip out of the state after cashing forged checks amounting nearly to one hundred thousand dollars, but was caught a few weeks later in Chicago while changing trains with his bride, whom he had kept in ignorance of his thefts. Most of the loot was recovered. Winchell, at one time an officer in the company, received a sentence of ten years.' "

"Oh, I say!" I cried frantically. "It's as clear as day. Hazel W.— By Gad, Hazel *Winchell!*"

"Wonderful!" squeaked Lovely, with complete absence of genuine enthusiasm. Suddenly animated by a new thought, he whirled on me, restraining himself only by the most violent effort from blowing into bits like a lively hand-grenade. "Mr. Fishe, ***when did you answer a letter for Miss Trask, signing her name?***"

"My dear old thing," I smiled, "I'm not Miss Trask's secretary. I have never——"

"Yes, Van," Gloria cut in; "don't you remember that anonymous letter mother asked you to attend to last week?"

"Of course," I apologized. "Some balmy beggar wrote Miss Trask stating that if she would get into communication with him she would receive information to her benefit. Mrs. Trask suspected a hoax of some description and so, with Miss Trask's consent, I answered the letter myself."

"And you never got any reply."

"Now, how did you know that?" I asked.

"I deduced it." He rose from his chair impressively. "The explanation, a logical reason for this note signed 'Gloria' in Mr. Fishe's writing was all I needed on top of the evidence of the bronze hairpin, the red note-book and the newspaper clipping to solve the identity of the persons who shot Bradley Ransome and robbed him of twenty thousand dollars in this room to-night. The criminals I must arrest are Oscar Winchell, the forger, and his wife, Hazel!"

LOVELY paced the length of the room, apparently in deep concentration. "I shall reconstruct the events of the past few weeks from the deductions I have made from the evidence at hand. I wish you would question me, please, that I may test my theory at every point."

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "I'm not a detective, but it seems rather to me, instead of talking about it, we should be on our way to capture the murderers. What?"

"You know their address, of course?" Lovely asked. Nasty sarcastic, I'd say, under the circumstances.

"Don't be an ass," I barked. "You have the lady's telephone-number, haven't you?"

"In code, which as yet is undeciphered," he replied, not any too politely contemptuous. "Furthermore, we have no description of either one to help us."

"We aren't precisely quivering with doubt as to whether the lady has red hair or not," I retorted. "However, get on with your theories, old chap. If your idea proves correct, it will remove the intolerable suspicion you've directed against Miss Trask and myself."

"Possibly it may," was his unexpected reply, "and possibly—we shall see. Here, then, seem the facts to me. Winchell, an officer of Ransome's company, is apprehended on his honeymoon and sentenced to ten years in prison for forgery and embezzlement. Sometime later, Mrs. Winchell, an innocent party if the account in the newspaper is to be believed, gets in touch with Ransome in New York. Whether because he is infatuated with her, or merely resumes an earlier acquaintance, or perhaps has his sympathy aroused for her predicament, he keeps in close touch with her and assists her financially. Entries in the note and check-books show that. Any objection thus far?"

Gloria and I shook our heads.

"Freed from prison, Winchell joins his wife in New York and discovers the state of intimacy existing between his wife and the man of whom he has always been jealous. His brain tortured with jealousy, twisted by ten years of prison life, Winchell determines to kill Ransome.

"As in all premeditated crimes, Winchell first planned his getaway. He must have money, and he must throw suspicion temporarily upon some one else. So he forced his wife to request twenty thousand dollars from Ransome upon some pretext which it is possible for us only to guess. But whatever it was, Ransome regarded it as vitally important and necessary——"

"Hold on a bit," I interrupted. "I don't know that. What abnormal instinct prompts you to say so?"

"Ransome's stubbornness, and insistence, described by Tusho, upon bringing that sum here *to-night!* In his own words, he had 'promised' it.

"The money arranged for, Winchell wrote a note to Miss Trask calculated to inspire a reply from almost any young woman. Why? Because Winchell, the forger, wanted a sample of Miss Trask's chirography. Follow me closely, please, in this. Miss Trask and her uncle live in the same city and are easily accessible to each other by telephone. Winchell therefore knew that he could not long deceive Ransome by forging Miss Trask's name to a request for an unusual sum of money, or *any* unusual request, in fact. But if Winchell did not intend to use her signature to deceive her uncle, whom did he hope to deceive? I'll tell you—the *police*, the investigators who should find the dead body of the man Winchell believed had wronged him.

"That Mr. Fishe answered his note instead of Miss Trask was an accident he could not foresee and did not realize. But in the note he left stuck on the file he wrote, 'Will surely be in for the money I've asked you for.' Which proves not only that he knew the money would be here, and that he intended to steal it, but also that he had planned completely enough to prepare a note cunningly designed to focus suspicion on some one else."

I suddenly recalled the telephone message I had received at midnight.

"By Jove! The chap who called me over the wire, advising me to leave the city immediately!"

"Of course!" shouted the detective. "Winchell took advantage of your quarrel with Ransome to attempt further to becloud the case by frightening you out of the city, which, had you gone, would surely have appeared to the police as the act of a guilty man.

"The circumstances of the crime itself are easily imagined. Winchell accompanied Hazel to the apartment-house to-night. They rode in the elevator to the floor above, descended the stairs and entered the library here. I do not believe Hazel realized her husband's murderous intentions. If she had, it is probable that not only would she have refused to come to the house but, as she had once before, would have warned Ransome.

"What conversation ensued we have no means of knowing. Winchell waited till Ransome opened the safe. Then he shot him.

"The report of his gun could be, and undoubtedly was, mistaken by the other tenants and the employees for the backfire of one of the many motor-cars constantly passing the house. On the other hand, a woman's scream would have been noted. That no one did hear one indicates that Hazel, overcome with horror, swooned in the big chair. In his effort to revive her, Winchell dislodged one of her hairpins, which fell upon the seat of the chair.

"After putting Ransome's money in his pocket, Winchell placed the note we found signed 'Gloria,' on the steel file, and walked up the stairs to the next floor before taking the elevator to the street."

INEVITABLE logic, by Jove! It explained everything. And far better than that, it cleared Gloria!

I turned to her with a winning smile and my mouth open to say something, to find she was regarding me under lowered lids in a dashed disconcerting manner.

"Sergeant Lovely mentioned a quarrel you had with uncle," she quietly remarked. "Did you quarrel over"—she hesitated—"over me?"

"Only partially," I assured her, endeavoring to ease her mind. "We descended to our own crude personages almost immediately."

"Is this the first you've heard of that quarrel, Miss Trask?" Lovely asked.

"Yes; although I've been dreading something of the sort for a week."

"You mean you've been expecting it?"

"I mean I've been trying to prevent it."

"Um." Lovely squinted menacingly at the delicious curls so melancholically drooping around Gloria's downcast face. "Miss Trask, when was the last time you saw Hazel Winchell?"

"I have never met or seen the lady to my certain knowledge." Gloria was unaccountably crimson. Something seemed to be surging within her which it was difficult to contain.

Lovely walked to the door of the sleeping-chamber and opened it. "I suggest you take advantage of this opportunity to relax and—er, refresh your memory, Miss Trask.

I shall be busy here for some time. I am sorry the circumstances of this crime involve you in such a manner that I do not feel justified in permitting you to return to your home to-night. Perhaps, after I have decoded Hazel's telephone-number, I shall not need you further."

"Excellent idea, my dear," I quickly seconded, taking her exquisite arm and assisting her to the door. She regarded me silently for a moment, closely, with an expression of something in her eyes, and then quietly closed the door behind her.

Lovely skipped to the hall door. "Tusho!" he called. The little valet had fallen asleep in a corner of the passage. "How much rent does Mr. Ransome pay for this apartment?"

"Four hundred twenty-five dollar month," Tusho yawned.

Lovely slammed the door and seated himself at the table. "Draw up a chair and help me work out this code," he commanded, without so much as a "sir" or "please."

"Never have been worth tuppence guessing riddles," I declined.

"That is why I want you to help. Any ideas you may suggest I shall know better than to waste my time on."

The fellow was becoming insufferable.

"I realize, of course," I said angrily, "that the more or less human qualities you are endowed with may possibly appeal to a few. But I am impelled to add that had I been Damon, and had Pythias possessed any of the peculiarities congested in your person from your excessive feet upward, a notable friendship would have been lost to history."

"Good!" Lovely ejaculated. "Perhaps if you get angry enough you may be able to say something which will clear that girl in there of all connection with this crime. It looks now as though hers had been the master mind behind it all."

"Don't be an utter idiot," I groaned. "Haven't you just told us that Winchell and Hazel were the criminals? Why should Miss Trask steal a paltry twenty thousand dollars when upon her uncle's death she'd fall heir to it anyway?"

Lovely glanced swiftly at the door to Gloria's room; then he whispered,

"That twenty thousand dollars was Winchell's price for the murder!"

For an instant my brain went numb. Of course I didn't credit a single syllable of his insane drivel. The mere suggestion was outrageous, impossible!

"What motive, what imaginable reason could Miss Trask have for plotting her uncle's death?" I shouted.

"The Gloria mine!" hissed the detective. "She learned that Ransome intended to sell it. That would cut off her income. She found a willing, jealous tool in Winchell." Before I could find a word, he rapidly continued: "But Winchell double-crossed her by leaving that forged note for the police to find. Then he clumsily attempted to frighten you away from New York. Both of which facts seem to indicate that he did not plan to leave the city for the present. That is why I must decode Hazel's telephone-number. I must learn whether or not she and her husband are still at that address."

"And when you find them, if you do, you'll find that Miss Trask knows no more of this horrible affair than—er, by Jove, than *I* do."

"Don't be childish," Lovely sneered. "I've still to be convinced that you didn't know of the plot, or at least suspect it, and are trying to shield the girl." Which remark, I realized, sealed my lips.

THE last Hazel W. entry in the little red note-book was GTUD—WES. "WES stands for Western, an upper West Side exchange," Lovely informed me. Drawing a blank sheet of paper to him, he wrote a line of figures from one to zero:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

"We know Ransome pays four hundred and twenty-five dollars a month for this apartment. And here is the stub of the check with which he paid this month's rent. The code letters upon it are $TOG.— —."

Under the figure 4 in his line he penciled the letter T. Beneath the 2 he wrote the code letter O, and placed G below the 5. The line thus appeared:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
—	O	—	T	G	—	—	—	—	—

He turned to stub 118, dated that day, marked $OP,— — —.— —, payable to "self." "If my deductions are correct, this is the check Ransome wrote to cover the twenty thousand dollars he got for Hazel," Lovely muttered. He added the two letters to the others:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
—	O	—	T	G	—	—	—	—	—
—	O	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	P

"My dear chap," I impatiently remonstrated, "what is the use of all this? I mean to say, there aren't sufficient figures at hand to decipher the entire code. Why not wait until the bank opens in the morning, and obtain a statement of ——"

"Wait?" Lovely sirened. "So Winchell and his wife can perfect their plans for a clean getaway?" He glared unbelievably at me. "Listen; maybe it's possible for you to understand what I'm trying to do. Nearly all codes are in the form of a sentence, two or three words forming a phrase easily remembered. I'm hoping we can put down on the chart enough letters whose significance we know to enable us to guess Ransome's code. If we can determine those words, the code is deciphered and Hazel's number—GTUD—is easily read. The telephone company can then supply us the street address of the party using that number."

Simple, when explained that way. Then I looked at the chart. It made no sense whatever.

Lovely fingered the papers and bills on the spike file. His attention riveted on one of them, a monthly statement from the telephone concern he was depending so upon. The figures were $3.68. Hastily he riffled the stubs until he came to the one numbered 117, payable to the telephone company, and coded $N.IE. Writing these three new letters under the proper numerals, he combined all the letters in one line:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
	O	N	T	G	I		E		P

"Now, what's that 'phone-number again?"

"GTUD," I said. "We know only two of those letters, the G and T, standing for 5 and 4."

Lovely ruefully rubbed his barren bean and started frantically to turn the pages of the note-book. After which he again examined all the stubs of the check-book.

"It's impossible!" he declared furiously.

"What?"

"I can find but *seven* letters! Only an extremely intricate code could make seven letters serve for ten numerals. I've gone over every entry in the note-book and every stub several times, but all I find are different combinations and repetitions of seven letters—O-N-T-G-I-E-P." With a gesture of defeat and disgust he tossed his pencil on the table.

"Oh, I say; don't give up," I urged, worrying over Gloria.

"What makes you think I am going to give—" He broke off short and stared at me curiously. "Did you say that purposely?"

"Of course I did," I replied, wondering what he meant.

"Maybe I owe you a lot of apologies," he murmured. "That's the code!"

"What!"

With a few strokes of his pencil he completed his chart:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
D	O	N	T	G	I	V	E	U	P

By Jove!

Lovely glanced at his watch. "Five-thirty." I had to confirm it with a glance at the relic strapped on my wrist. Where had all the hours gone since midnight?

IN THREE minutes the detective had called up the information person at the telephone company's office and found that Western 5491 was the address of an apartment-dwelling in one of the Seventies near Broadway. He then called the little Jap in from the hallway and instructed him to prepare a breakfast for us all, and finally he had tapped upon the door of the room to which Gloria had retired.

When she entered the library I gazed, completely nonplused, astounded, you know what I'm trying to express, at her sparkling blue eyes, tinted cheeks and glowing ringlets. *She'd been sleeping!* Nervy? Rather.

A tasteless, conversationless breakfast concluded, Gloria and I squeezed with Lovely into the seat of his huge brute of a roadster. At Seventy-fifth street he turned sharply to the left and drew up at the curb.

"We'll go the rest of the way in a taxi," he explained. A few moments later, standing on the walk in front of the apartment-house dwelling wherein we hoped to locate Winchell and his wife, he said: "Miss Trask, you will remain inside the cab, please. I can't afford to have you seen by the Winchells."

We routed out the sleepy manager of the building.

"You've a tenant by the name of Mrs. Winchell?"

"Yes, sir. Apartment 5 B."

"Lives alone, does she?"

"She did. About a week ago her husband came on from the West and joined her. But," the manager went on, "they checked out last evening."

"Checked out?"

"Mr. Winchell informed me late last evening that business matters necessitated their leaving for the South to-day."

"Not till to-day? Did they occupy the apartment last night?"

"Yes."

"Are they still in it?"

"I'll see." He walked to the telephone on the wall and questioned the switchboard operator. "The operator tells me Mr. and Mrs. Winchell went out with their traveling bags just after you gentlemen came in."

"Come on!" yelled the sergeant. We dashed frenziedly into the hall—through it—and out to the sidewalk. There was no one in sight. The taxi was gone. Gloria had completely disappeared!

"I *knew* it!" Lovely cursed. "They're all in this together! Miss Trask drove the Winchells off in the taxi. We've played right into her hand. *But*," he exploded, "they won't get far. I had sense enough to take the license-number of the taxi-cab."

WITHIN a half-hour he had sent telegrams to all near-by cities and villages to watch for and detain the car. He had posted men at ferries and railway stations with orders to pick up the driver. Then we settled down to wait for developments.

Nine o'clock! I knew Gloria was as innocent as a bleating lamb, but, "I have it!" I cried. "She's pursuing the Winchells. She recognized them and followed them."

"Recognized them!" Lovely sneered. "According to her story, she's never seen them. Besides, if she is chasing them, why doesn't she send us a message?"

Ten o'clock! The telephone-bell rang. I jumped clear into the center of the room.

"Message from the hospital," Lovely told me. "Ransome's condition remains unchanged."

Eleven o'clock! A telegram! "I'll stake all I own it's from Miss Trask!" I shouted.

"You lose," Lovely croaked dryly. "It's from the chief of police of Bridgeport, Connecticut. His men have found a wrecked taxi-cab on the outskirts of town with a number-plate tallying with my wire. The chauffeur has been taken to a hospital, unconscious, his skull fractured. No evidence of any one else having been in the machine. Come on!"

We ran out and tumbled into Lovely's ugly high-powered roadster.

As mile after mile died behind us, I filled up with forebodings and premonitions and all manner of like what-nots. Not on my own account. I forgot altogether my nerves wondering how Gloria's were. A wrecked motor, the driver injured; what of the girl I was determined to marry if I could find her?

Dizzily rounding a curve on the Boston Post Road, we suddenly came upon the taxi-cab. It had run off the side of the road into a ditch.

Lovely opened the door of the tonneau and carefully scrutinized the interior. He pounced upon a bit of white pasteboard on the floor. By Jove! It was one of Gloria's visiting-cards. Something had been written on it, scrawled in pencil.

N. Y.	DNTUPU
CONN.	IVVVI
MASS.	NNPDOD

I shook the detective's shoulder. "It's—don't you see—it's—hang it all, it's a message!"

"Message for whom?'

"For us, you stupid ass! It's in the bally code. DNTUPU in the code is 134909. New York, 134909, dammit!"

"Auto license plate-numbers!" Lovely shouted, hopping about like a toad who'd lost his horn. "Know what this means? I'll tell you. The Winchells drove away in an automobile. Miss Trask followed them. Winchell had supplied himself with several sets of plates to aid his flight and break his trail. Miss Trask noted the numbers each time he changed plates. She——"

Abruptly he ran to the front of the car and feverishly examined the flat tire on the broken wheel. Under a gaping hole in the tire he found a long, sharp indentation in the steel rim. "This proves it," he squealed. "Winchell discovered he was being followed. He fired a shot into the tire, causing a blowout. Traveling at a high rate of speed, the car became unmanageable, swerved and pitched into the ditch."

"But Gloria," I quavered. "What happened to—" My eye lit upon a shred of veiling at the roadside. Instantly I recognized it as hers.

Lovely's eyes opened wide. "Kidnaped!" he whispered. "When the taxi ran into the ditch, Winchell and his wife came back to it and seized Miss Trask. There was a struggle in which her veil was torn. They subdued her and carried her off in their car."

Gloria, tender and gentle and innocent and beautiful beyond word, at the mercy of a murderer! Something commenced burning me internally. I was fair sick!

We raced on to Bridgeport and dispatched a number of telegrams with the license-numbers decoded from Gloria's visiting-card.

"It's probably a waste of time," Lovely gloomed heavily. "Winchell no doubt has other plates. He won't use the ones he sported before he wrecked the taxi."

He insisted that we lunch. Toying with a cup of bad tea, I said, "Which direction do you think they might have taken?"

"Can't say. We'll stick to the Post Road and see if we can pick up any trace of a car carrying a man and a red-headed woman."

"Two women," I corrected.

Lovely shook his head. "I wish I could convince myself that Winchell will bother long with Miss Trask—if she's innocent."

For over two hours that bright afternoon we followed a blind trail without the remotest encouragement. No one we questioned had noticed the car we were seeking. It was four o'clock when I chanced to get a flash from some shining object lying in the weeds a bit to one side of the highway.

"Stop!" I leaped from the seat and ran to the object. It was a motor license-plate; N. Y. 134909! By Jove! The uplifting relief to learn we were on the proper road!

A mile further on the road forked.

"Which way?" muttered Lovely. "That way leads to Boston; the other—" I didn't wait for him to finish. On a low bush to the right of the Boston road I'd seen a bit of white cloth. It was a lace handkerchief, with Gloria's initials embroidered in one corner showing like ugly welts through the dark blood stains on the linen.

On we went. Night fell swiftly around us in the wooded area through which we were slowly driving, eyes astrain for further indications of the fleeing motor ahead of us. Disheartened and baffled, we stopped at a wayside garage to replenish our oil and petrol-tanks. Lovely asked the chap who served us the usual question.

"Ain't sure if I know the car you mean," the man replied, "but there was a funny thing happened this afternoon. Man drove in alone in a reconstructed five-passenger. Said something was wrong with his carbureter and he wanted it fixed in a hurry. I located the trouble and told him it was a three-hour job. He told me to go ahead, and walked away. About half an hour ago he come back, paid me and drove out. Asked me the road to Newport, but instead of taking it, he started up that there detour toward New London. A hundred and fifty yards up the road two women stepped from behind that clump of oak. One of them helped the other into the machine, and it drove off."

"How long ago was that?" Lovely asked.

"About half an hour."

We hastily settled our score and set off in fresh pursuit.

WE HAD the road to ourselves. We saw no other cars, not even a horse-drawn vehicle, as we bumped and jolted on, exhilarated and tensed by the frantic echoes startled by the heavy exhaust of our powerful engine. Topping a long grade, unexpectedly for all our hopes, far ahead we dimly discerned the red tail-light of a motor-car. Lovely crowded another ounce of pressure into our drive-shaft. Gradually we gained on the car in front; gradually that dancing tail-light grew more distinct, larger.

"Got a gun?" shrieked Lovely, his face straight ahead.

"No, I haven't," I answered.

As I spoke, the red light was extinguished. The manner of it showed the car had not turned off the road. I mean to say, it was clear the car had not been driven off on a by-road or fork. It—the light—had been plain before our eyes. Suddenly it was not. There was but one conclusion: it had been switched off. The driver had realized he was being followed!

Which placed us in a sorry mess, a ticklish position. The sky was inky black, not even the glimmer of a star. Tall trees crowded both sides of the lane. We were perhaps an eighth of a mile behind the car when the light had been extinguished. Had it gone on, or was a trap being prepared for us to dash into?

Lovely slackened speed. "Take the wheel." We changed seats. I drove on, alert. Suddenly our headlights picked up the car ahead, motionless at one side of the road. Lovely drew his automatic.

"Put out your lights," he softly ordered. I did so. "Now slowly; pass the car."

As we crept abreast, Lovely flashed an electric torch over it. The car was deserted!

"Stop," the sergeant whispered. "Get down on the floor of the car here with me." I could feel and hear rather than see him fumbling with the spotlight lamp attached to the frame of the wind-shield. "Listen"—his words came short and clean-clipped—"Winchell is probably back in the woods watching us. I'm going to climb out on the running-board. When I give you the signal, turn on the spotlight switch. Then put your derby hat on top of your stick and slowly raise it above the back of the seat. Keep your head down below the seat. I've turned the spot in such a way that the hat should be clearly seen in its rays. Try to make it look as though you were cautiously peeping over the top of the seat. If Winchell is the crook I think he is, he'll fire at the hat. The flash of his gun will show me where he is. Then I can get busy with my automatic. Understand?"

"Right-o!" Deuced clever idea! What?

"Good! Do as I say, and if luck is with us, we'll have all three of those crooks caught in five minutes."

"All *three*," I choked. "You mean——"

"I mean exactly what I say. Don't you see the ambush we've been lead into? Miss Trask left a trail a blind baby could follow. The card in the taxi, the license-plate in full sight along the roadside, the handkerchief on the bush, the faked delay at the garage to enable us to catch up with them—all these were deliberately planned. Miss Trask knew before she started that I had the crime worked out to the last detail. *And you and I are the only ones who do know all the details.* Unless she's to go to the chair, she's got to put us out of the way!"

For a moment I was stunned, paralyzed. Then I felt the blood slugging heavily at my temples. "By God, Lovely, I'm going to make you retract that statement if it's the last act of my life! Don't fear I'll not help you capture Miss Trask. I want her to see you eat every one of the damnable, scurrilous, lying words you've spoken. And after that I'm going to give you the thrashing of your scoundrelly life!"

Queer thing; I felt exactly as I did the night a Jerry ran his bayonet through my chum's neck while he was sleeping. I mean to say, a tearing and throbbing inside, the itch and ache of muscles held in leash, and a fog—dammit, it can't be described. One must really feel it, you know. Never imagined I'd ever experience it again, but——

"Lights!" hissed Lovely. He'd crawled on the running-board to the rear end of the car. I turned on the switch. The white rays of the spotlight, just missing the top of the seat, shot into the tree-tops. Slowly, coolly, I raised my hat on my stick. Bang! A bullet whistled over my head. Lovely's gun cracked. A woman's scream pierced the darkness. Then a dead hush settled.

I WONDERED if the scream had been Gloria's, if the detective's bullet had——

"Sst!" Lovely had slightly changed his position. "That hat again. I must know if my first shot got Winchell or one of the women."

Again I raised the hat. A shot zipped clean through it. Once more Lovely fired at the flash among the trees forty yards back of us. This time there was no scream.

"Lights out!" the sergeant ordered. Hurriedly he removed the spotlight from the frame and, putting it under his arm, trailed the long length of wire with which it was fitted across the road. "I've focused the spot on the clump of trees where Winchell is hiding," he explained a moment later. "Don't turn the switch till I give you the word." He doubled himself up near the rear wheel. "Now!"

The trees and bushes sprang out of the blackness into the white flood of light. Immediately came the sharp shock of a shot, Lovely's answer, another streak of red through the leaves, the tinkle of glass, pitchy blackness, a woman's wail; then silence again. Winchell's third bullet had wrecked the spotlight!

The sound of the woman's voice kept ringing in my ears. I couldn't stand the inactivity and distracting uncertainty another moment. Stealthily I dropped out of the roadster and, crossing to the sheltering cover of the trees, began to make my way cautiously toward the spot the screams had come from. I'd gone some twenty feet when the murderous gun again flared. The shot was answered from a point directly opposite me. I realized instantly that Lovely had left the car and was stalking through the underbrush on the other side of the lane.

With the completeness of a battle-map there popped into my brain a scheme to rescue Gloria. It would take a bit of doing but, by Jove, I'd jolly well show that Lovely bounder— A twig snapped under my foot, sounding like a bally mine explosion. I threw myself flat. Not a murmur except the nervous rustle of the uneasy leaves. I rose slowly.

"Van!" It was a mere whisper, might have been the sigh of a vagrant puff of breeze. But I knew it wasn't.

"Gloria! Sweetheart! Where are you?" I breathed, vainly reaching out in the darkness.

"Ssh. Stay where you are!" A palpitating moment somehow passed before her hand lightly grazed my shoulder. In an instant I had her in my arms and was imprinting a whacking kiss on her incredible lips. Two more silly shots interrupted us.

"Gloria darling," I said, holding her close, "you must marry me immediately. I'll not continue this sort of thing further. I don't like it. You're in a frightful mess."

"But, Van——"

"Quiet, dear." The old sense of steadiness and—and *power*, by Gad, which I'd totally lacked since that 5.9 dropped at St. Hilaire, swept over me. I knew I was right. "Lovely has left his car a few rods up the road. We'll clamber in and make a run for New York. The Cunarder *Oceana* sails for Liverpool in the morning."

"But, Van, I——"

"My dear girl—" I spoke sharply. Preposterous, her arguing with me at a moment like that! "Sorry; but there's nothing more to be said. Come along, you plucky little angel!" I kissed her again, by Jove! Cool? Rather.

I turned the roadster around by hand till her nose pointed toward New York, and hopped in behind the wheel. Gloria was curled up on the floor of the car out of harm's way. With a wisp of a prayer that I might not run off the road in the darkness, I slipped in the clutch. We started with a jerk and a rear. A woman shrieked hysterically some unintelligible remark. Lovely yelled loudly. Picking up speed with every revolution, we whizzed past the spot where Winchell was hiding. A shot, then another pinged over our heads. From Lovely's direction two more sped us on our way.

"Go to the devil!" I howled, standing up and shaking my fist. Gad, it was fortunate Gloria had presence of mind to leap on the bally steering-wheel. She yanked the car back on the road and dragged me down into my seat.

"Do you know the proper roads?" I shouted.

"No."

"Nor do I." Then for fear she might think I was worried over an inconsequential thing like the proper direction, I kissed her again. By Jove!

SIDE by side we drove on through the night, taking the wrong turnings at every conceivable opportunity, floundering through sand and dirt lanes, blithely cutting across fields and railway tracks whenever we'd see a stretch of inviting macadam; crashing through villages, waking sleeping dogs, roosting chickens and all manner of things, but always bounding back into the Post Road after each delirious excursion.

The murkiness of the night began to thin. A streak of gray appeared on our left. An advertising bill-board instructing me to blow the motor-horn—dammit, I couldn't; it was choked with mud—told us we were but twenty miles from New York. I looked at my watch. Five o'clock. Stopping the car, I removed the police-department tag from the radiator and smeared mud on the numerals of the license-plates.

"Hardly think this precaution is necessary," I told Gloria, "but Lovely may have walked into some village with a telegraph office. I forgot to mention that I took out all the spark-plugs from Winchell's motor and threw them away."

At Gloria's residence we found Mrs. Trask fully dressed and horribly upset, poor soul! When she saw Gloria covered with dust, her hair rioting unrestrainedly, her skirt torn and mud-caked, she absolutely moaned. I caught a glimpse of my face in a mirror—dirty, unshaven, drawn, a broad streak of black grease running from under my left ear to the corner of my eye, sunken and bloodshot from the wind and forty-eight hours without a wink of sleep. Briefly and without mincing my words, I explained to Mrs. Trask her daughter's predicament.

"Now," I concluded, "I shall run over to my hotel and throw a few things into a bag. Gloria can do likewise. In the mean time, you, my dear Mrs. Trask, rout out a clergyman. You must know one who won't be too frightfully perturbed at this hour to forget the wedding ceremony. The *Oceana* sails at ten. Purser chap, luckily, is a friend of mine—was attached to my division in Belgium. He'll give us accommodations and secrecy, never fear. Before Lovely can set his dashed police machinery to work, we'll be stowed away aboard ship with no one but you knowing what's become of us."

Mrs. Trask eyed me, by Jove, as though she'd never really seen me before. In a dazed monotone she said:

"Don't bother about coffee. I'll have it ready when you return."

THE blissful sensation of incalculable relief—if you know what I mean—when the pilot dropped overboard and the hospitable hills of Jersey or somewhere grew low on the briny horizon. Gloria was radiant, simply unable to keep her eyes from the ring I'd selected at Tiffany's one day after her mother had entertained me by proudly recounting her relationship to General Thing-a-jig who defeated the British at Lexington, and also to Admiral What's-his-name who sunk so many of his Majesty's cruisers in 1812. And to cap the beatific climax, just before tiffin the purser chum gave me a wireless message from Mrs. Trask.

Bradley's recovery assured. Lovely captured Winchell and wife. Obtained full confession completely exonerating Gloria. Love.

Docking at Liverpool to-morrow, wondering what arrangements the governor wirelessed he had made with the passport officials concerning the gorgeous bride has rather made the whole affair seem like a cinema play photographed with a soft-focus lens. But when I reflect that if that unlovely Lovely bounder had not found the bronze hairpin and the red note-book which set him on the right trail of the criminals, when I remember that if I had not peremptorily put down my foot and, discarding all formality and fear of Ransome's and Mrs. Trask's displeasure, positively bulled my way through to the happy ending, when I realize that the ocean voyage, or the climate of New York, or Gloria's angelic disposition has entirely cured my nerves—I say, when I recall all that—by Jove, extraordinary! What?

* * * * * * *

Extracts from a letter Mrs. Cyril Van Puhr Fishe intrusted to the purser for posting at Liverpool:

DEAREST UNCLE BRAD:

Of course I shall never, *never* forgive you, even though the wonderful success of the "cure" you and Dr. Lovely planned and effected has made me happier than I have any right to be . . . he's so greatly changed, Uncle; alert, active . . . principally his eyes . . . confidence, authority, even recklessness. No difficulty now in understanding the Croix de Guerre and D. C. M. which puzzled mother so. But . . . especially as I had told you and mother I would *not* be a party to it. When I entered the library and saw Van's worried, anxious face, I wanted to stop the farce immediately, in spite of that pitiful letter from his darling old father which concluded: "He *was* a man—dammit, a hero! And if you, my dear Mr. Ransome, by any method short of incapacitating him for life can restore my son to me, God's blessings be upon your head in abundance." But Dr.Lovely . . . knowing you were in the next room with your ear glued to a dictagraph . . . Van growing angrier and more outraged every moment . . . his clenched jaws and the murderous detestation which blazed in his eyes at every slurring remark of the doctor's showed clearly that the "shaking him out of himself" treatment was already producing encouraging results . . . suppose you know that the second shot you fired from behind the big oak tree utterly ruined Van's hat . . . never shall forget pudgy little Mrs. Lovely sitting on the ground having the time of her life giving vent to those piercing shrieks and wails. If the doctor ever tires of his mental-and-nervous-afflictions practise . . . dramatic stage, although I imagine he's so conceited at correctly forecasting the result of his treatment of Van, and, by the way, I hope on top of all your other expenses the doctor presents an extortionate bill . . . but if he values his skin, warn him not to cross Van's path until I've explained the entire affair to the dear boy. But, Uncle, oh, *Uncle,* how, when, where, under what circumstances am I ever to screw my courage to the task of telling my precious love of a husband how *his wife was wished on him?* And because I know I must, I shall never forgive you.

Lovingly,
GLORIA.

The Circle

A Brilliant and Witty Play Which Shows the Futility of Giving Advice to the Coming Generation. "Save Your Breath," It Teaches in Effect; "for the Young Will Learn Only by Experience, as You Did"

By W. Somerset Maugham

Published by courtesy of the author, the producers, the Selwyns, and the publisher, The George H. Doran Company

THIRTY years ago, *Lady Kitty Champion-Cheney* startled her world by running away with *Lord Porteous*, her husband's best friend and his colleague in the House of Commons. A note on her pincushion was the only good-by to her husband and five-year-old son, *Arnold.* The runaways spent most of their time in Florence, where in certain circles they were accepted because of their wealth and former position.

Now, for the first time since their elopement, they are in England, and *Elizabeth, Lady Kitty's* daughter-in-law, has created a storm by inviting them down to Aston-Adey over her husband's protests. As if this were not situation enough, *Arnold's* father has returned unexpectedly from Paris. *Elizabeth* tells him the news, and *Clive* goes back to his cottage on the estate.

Shortly after, the butler announces *Lady Kitty* and *Lord Porteous. Teddie Luton* and *Mrs. Shenstone,* house-guests, are with the *Champion-Cheneys* in the drawing-room when the renegades are shown in.

Lady Kitty has dyed hair and painted cheeks. She is outrageously dressed, and behaves as if she were still twenty-five. *Lord Porteous* is bald, snappy and gruff. *Lady Kitty* kisses *Elizabeth* effusively; then her eyes fall on *Teddie.*

LADY K.: My boy, my boy! I should have known you anywhere!

EL. (*hastily, indicating her husband*): *That's* Arnold.

LADY K. (*without a moment's hesitation*): The image of his father! I should have known him anywhere! (*She throws her arms round his neck.*) My boy! My boy!

LORD PORTEOUS *grunts.*

LADY K.: Tell me; would you have known me again? Have I changed?

ARNOLD: I was only five, you know, when, when you——

EL. (*coming to the rescue*): This is Arnold, Lord Porteous.

POR. (*shaking hands with him*): How do you do? I knew your father.

Luncheon is announced, when *Lady Kitty* suddenly sets up a loud cry.

LADY K.: My lip-stick! I had it in the car, Hughie, you remember——

POR.: I don't remember anything about it.

Champion-Cheney comes up to the window just then, holding a little gold case.

LADY K.: My lip-stick! It's Saint Anthony! I said a little prayer to him when I was hunting in my bag.

POR.: Saint Anthony be blowed! It's Clive, by God!"

The three chief actors in the drama of thirty years ago are quite undismayed by this sudden meeting. *Lady Kitty* offers *Clive* her cheek to be kissed, and *Clive* and *Lord Porteous* exchange unembarrassed conversation, consisting, on *Porteous's* side, of sour observations on his rheumatism and the infernal English climate.

Clive begs for an invitation to lunch, and *Elizabeth* is obliged to give it. After lunch he stays on, seeming to take a wicked delight in the petty squabbles in which his wife and her lover constantly indulge. Several days pass thus.

C.-C.: Upon my soul, they might be married, they frip so much. You were asking me the other day what she was like when she ran away. I didn't tell you half. She was so gay and natural. Who would have thought animation would turn into such frivolity, and that charming impulsiveness lead to such a ridiculous affectation?

El.: It rather sets my nerves on edge to hear the way you talk of her. You loved her once. Have you no feeling for her at all?

C.-C.: None. Why should I? My dear, her soul is as thickly rouged as her face. She hasn't an emotion that's sincere. She's tinsel. You think I'm a cruel, cynical old man. Why, when I think of what she was, if I didn't laugh at what she's become, I'd cry. She was only twenty-seven when she went away. She's a silly, worthless woman, because she's led a silly, worthless life.

El. (*disturbed*): You're horrid to-day. How do you know she wouldn't be just the same if she'd remained your wife?

C.-C.: I don't say it's I who could have prevented her from becoming this ridiculous caricature of a pretty woman grown old. But life could. Here, she would have had the friends to fit her station and a decent activity and worthy interests. Ask her what her life has been all these years among divorced women and kept women and the men who consort with them.

El.: At all events, she loved, and she loved greatly. I have only pity and affection for her.

C.-C.: And if she loved, what d'you think she felt when she saw that she had ruined Hughie? Look at him! He was tight last night after dinner and tight the night before. Can you imagine that *that* was a brilliant young man, whom every one expected to be prime minister? Look at him now—a grumpy, sodden old fellow with false teeth.

El. (*looking at him suspiciously*): Why are you saying all this to me?

C.-C.: Am I hurting your feelings?

El.: I think I've had enough for the present.

Clive, *with a gesture of apology to* Teddie, *who has been an uncomfortable bystander during this little tilt, goes out. There is a moment's pause.* Teddie *hesitates a little.*

Teddie: It seems so difficult to get a few moments with you alone. I wonder if you've been making it difficult.

El.: I wanted to think.

Teddie: You said, you said—you cared—for me. Do you mind if we talk it over now? It makes me feel rather shy and awkward. I've repeated to myself over and over again exactly what I want to say to you, and now all I've prepared to say seems rather foolish.

El.: I'm afraid I'm going to cry.

Teddie: I feel it's all so tremendously serious, and I think we ought to keep emotion out of it. You're rather emotional, aren't you?

El.: So are you, for the matter of that.

Teddie: Our only chance is to be very matter of fact. (*He stops for a moment.*) You see, I've never been in love with any one before—not really. It's knocked me endways. I don't know how I can live without you now. Does that old fool know I'm in love with you?

El.: I think so.

Teddie: When he was talking about Lady Kitty smashing up Lord Porteous's career, I thought there was something at the back of it.

El.: I think he was trying to persuade me not to smash up yours.

Teddie: I'm sure that's very considerate of him, but I don't happen to have one to smash. I wish I had. It's the only time in my life I've wished I were a hell of a swell, so that I could chuck it all and show you how much more you are to me than anything else in the world.

El. (*affectionately*): You're a dear old thing, Teddie!

Teddie: You know, I don't really know how to make love, but if I did, I couldn't do it now, because I just want to be absolutely practical.

El. (*with a break in her voice*): You owl!

Teddie: No, Elizabeth; don't say things like that to me. I want you to consider all the pros and cons, and my heart's thumping against my chest, and you know I love you, I love you, I love you!

El. (*in a sigh of passion*): Oh, my precious!

Teddie (*impatiently, but with himself, rather than with* Elizabeth): Don't be idiotic, Elizabeth. I'm not going to tell you that I cannot live without you—and a lot of muck like that. You know that you mean everything in the world to me. (*Almost giving it up as a bad job.*) O My God!

El. (*her voice faltering*): D'you think there's anything you can say to me that I don't know already?

Teddie (*desperately*): But I haven't said a single thing that I wanted to. I'm a business man, and I want to put it all in a business way, if you understand what I mean. You see, it's not just because you're awfully pretty that I love you. I'd love you just as much if you were old and ugly. It's you I love, not what you look like. And it's not only love. Love be blowed! It's that I *like* you so tremendously. I think you're such a ripping good sort. I just want to be with you. I feel so jolly and happy just to think that you're there. I'm so awfully *fond* of you.

El. (*laughing through her tears*): I don't know if this is your idea of introducing a business proposition.

Teddie: Damn you, you won't let me.

El.: You said, "Damn you!"

Teddie: I meant it.

El.: Your voice sounded as if you meant it, you perfect duck!

Teddie: Really, Elizabeth, you're intolerable. You're putting me off my blow. What I want to say is perfectly simple. I'm a very ordinary business man.

El.: You've said that before.

Teddie (*angrily*): Shut up! I haven't got a bob besides what I earn. I've got no position. I'm nothing. You're rich, and you've a big pot and you've got everything any one can want. It's awful cheek, my saying anything to you at all. But, after all, there's only one thing that really matters in the world, and that's love. I love you. Chuck all this, Elizabeth, and come to me.

El.: Teddie, nothing in the world matters anything to me but you. I'll go wherever you take me. I love you.

Teddie: Let's get out quickly. It's no good wasting time. Elizabeth?

El.: What?

Teddie: Nothing. I just like to say "Elizabeth."

El.: You fool!

Teddie: I say; can you shoot?

El.: No.

Teddie: I'll teach you. You don't know how ripping it is to start from your camp at dawn and travel through the jungle. And you're so tired at night and the sky's all starry. It's a rare treat. Of course I didn't want to say anything about all that till you'd decided. I've made up my mind to be absolutely practical.

El. (*chaffing him*): The only practical thing you said was that love is the only thing that really matters. Isn't it fun being in love with some one who's in love with you?

Teddy naturally has compunctions about remaining under the roof of the man whose home he is about to despoil, and so it is agreed that he shall go to the inn. *Elizabeth* decides that she will not leave a note on her pincushion, as *Lady Kitty* did, but that she will have it out with her husband.

When *Elizabeth* presents her case to *Arnold* and aks for her freedom that she may marry *Luton*, *Arnold* refuses in as tempestuous a manner as he can bring to anything but a fraudulent antique which he has been induced to buy. He refuses to divorce her, and also to allow her to divorce him. His father, when he tells him of the situation, urges a different method of procedure. He counsels *Arnold* to substitute generosity for opposition.

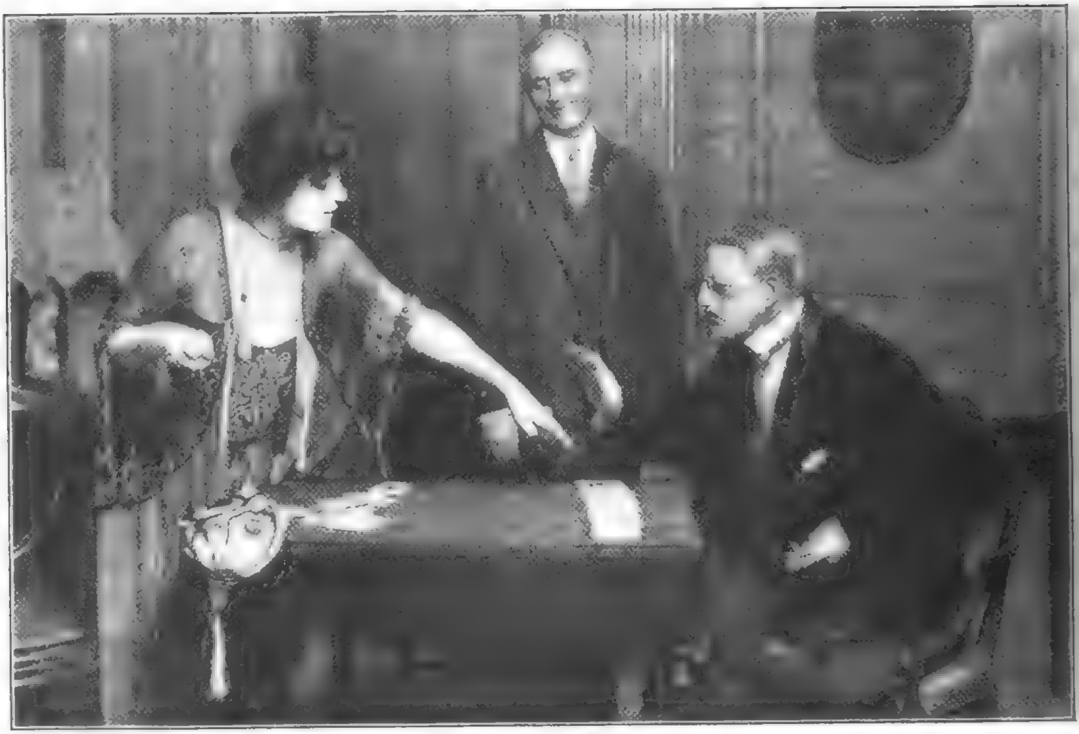
"A woman will always sacrifice herself if you give her the opportunity. It is her favorite form of self-indulgence," he tells him. Then he enlists *Lady Kitty's* aid.

Thirty years as *Lord Porteous's* mistress have made *Lady Kitty* an ardent advocate of marriage. Her experience has taught her that it is a blessed institution for women and that they are fools to meddle with it. She says this to *Elizabeth*.

Lady K.: It breaks my heart to think that you're going to make the same pitiful mistake that I made.

El.: You see, you don't know how much I love Teddie.

Lady K.: And so you think I didn't love Hughie? Do you think he didn't love me? Oh, of course in the beginning it was heavenly. We felt so brave and adventurous, and we were so much in love. The first two years were wonderful. People cut me, you know, but I didn't mind. I thought love was everything. But you know men are very funny. Even when they are in love, they're not in love all day long. They want



Photographs by White

Elizabeth decides to elope with *Teddie.*

IT IS a somewhat startling variation of the "eternal triangle" that is depicted in the above scene from the second act of "The Circle." From left to right are *Lady Kitty* (Mrs. Leslie Carter), who thirty years before left the roof of her husband, *Clive Champion-Cheney* (Ernest Lawford), with *Lord Porteous* (John Drew). *Lady Kitty* and her husband have never since seen each other until now, and *Clive* is treating the situation in a humorous and utterly cynical manner.

The elopers have come to a cat-and-dog kind of existence. At the end of a tempestuous rubber of bridge, *Porteous* is trying to regain his calm and dignity with a game of solitaire. But *Lady Kitty* cannot refrain from butting in, and a grand flare-up is imminent.

"THE CIRCLE" is a play about sophisticated people and perhaps appeals most to the sophisticated; yet it is a sound and forceful argument on the incontestable superiority of marriage over other forms of sex-union.

In the above picture (left to right) we see *Teddie Luton* (John Halliday), who has induced *Mrs. Arnold Champion-Cheney* (Estelle Winwood) to elope with him. *Lord Porteous* (John Drew) and *Elizabeth's* mother-in-law, *Lady Kitty* (Mrs. Leslie Carter) had done the same thing thirty years before, but even the sorry tale of a sordid existence in foreign cities among *déclassé* people they are here pouring out cannot turn the infatuated young couple from their purpose. "No one can learn from the experience of others," says *Porteous.*

Photographs by White

Arnold is more interested in old furniture than in his wife.

change and recreation. When I saw he was attracted by some one else, the fear and the jealousy that seized me!

El.: But do you mean to say he fell in love with some one else?

Lady K.: Of course he did—eventually. Men have always been attracted by me, and there were plenty who were only too anxious to console me. But I had my self-respect to think of. I felt that, whatever Hughie did, I would do nothing that I should regret.

El.: You must be very glad now.

Lady K.: Oh, yes. Notwithstanding all my temptations, I've been absolutely faithful to Hughie—in spirit.

El. (*hoarsely*): Oh, but I think that's—dreadful!

Lady K: Are you shocked? One sacrifices one's life for love, and then one finds that love doesn't last. The tragedy of love isn't death or separation. One gets over them. The tragedy of love is indifference.

Arnold comes in and asks for a few moments with *Elizabeth.* He has taken to heart his father's homily, and after protesting his deep love for her, he says that his only chance of happiness lies in immolating himself that she may be free. He even insists on making her an allowance of two thousand pounds a year, for, he reminds her, *Teddie* is a poor man. To top it all, he offers to give her sufficient cause for divorce, which will mean the end of his career in politics.

El.: Oh, Arnold, it's cruel to be so generous!

Arnold: It's not generous at all. It's the only way I have of showing you how deep and passionate and sincere my love for you is.

He kisses her gravely on the forehead and leaves her. When *Lady Kitty* comes back, she finds a very subdued *Elizabeth.*

Lady K.: My poor child!

El.: Oh, isn't life rotten? Why can't one be happy without making other people unhappy?

Lord Porteous brings *Teddie* in.

Teddie (*bravely*): What is it?

El.: I can't come away with you, Teddie.

Teddie: Why not?

El. (*looking away in embarrassment*): I don't love you enough.

Teddie: Now, look here, Elizabeth; you know perfectly well that I'm in love with you, and I know perfectly well that you're in love with me. So what are you talking nonsense for?

El. (*her voice breaking*): I can't say it if you're cross with me.

Teddie (*smiling very tenderly*): I'm not cross with you, silly! (*Taking her hand and making her sit down.*) Now tell me exactly what you want to say. By the way, do you want Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous to be here?

Lady K.: Elizabeth asked us to stay.

Teddie: Oh, I don't mind—bless you! I only thought you might feel rather in the way.

El.: Teddie, it wasn't true when I said I didn't love you. Of course I love you. But Arnold loves me, too. I didn't know how much. He's been very kind to me, and so good. He offered to let me divorce him.

Teddie: That's very decent of him.

El.: I can't take advantage of his generosity.

Teddie: I dare say he'll get a lot of satisfaction out of it.

El.: You're being beastly, Teddie. He was simply wonderful. I never knew he had it in him. He was really noble.

Teddie: You are talking rot, Elizabeth.

El.: I wonder if you'd be capable of acting like that? What would you do if I were married to you and came and told you I loved somebody else?

Teddie: You have very pretty blue eyes, Elizabeth. I'd black first one and then the other. After that, we'd see.

El.: You damned brute!

Teddie: Don't you think we get on rather well together?

Por.: Elizabeth's a fool if she doesn't stick to her husband. It's bad enough for the man, but for the woman—it's damnable. I hold no brief for Arnold. He plays bridge like a fool. Saving your presence, Kitty, I think he's a prig. But you stick to him, Elizabeth; stick to him. Man is a gregarious animal. We're members of a herd. If we break the herd's laws, we suffer for it.

Lady K.: Oh, Elizabeth—my dear child, don't go! It's not worth it! It's not worth it! I tell you that, and I've sacrificed everything to love.

El.: I'm afraid—I can't face it. It's asking too much of me. Let's say good-by to one another, Teddie. It's the only thing to do. And have pity on me. I'm giving up all my hope of happiness.

Teddie: But I wasn't offering you happiness. I don't think my sort of love tends to happiness. I'm jealous. I'm not a very easy man to get on with. I'm often out of temper and irritable. I should be fed to the teeth with you sometimes, and so would you be with me. I dare say we'd fight, fight like cat and dog, and sometimes we'd hate each other. Often you'd be wretched and bored stiff and lonely, and often you'd be frightfully homesick, and then you'd regret all you'd lost. Stupid women would be rude to you because we'd run away together. And some of them would cut you. I don't offer you peace and quietness. I offer you unrest and anxiety. I don't offer you happiness. I offer you love!

El. (*stretching out her arms*): You hateful creature, I absolutely adore you!

He throws his arms round her and kisses her passionately on the lips.

Lady K.: Of course, the moment he said he'd give her a black eye, I knew it was finished.

Por. (*good-humoredly*): You're damned fools, both of you—damned fools. If you like, you can have my car.

Teddie: That's awfully kind of you. As a matter of fact, I got it out of the garage. It's just along the drive.

Por. (*indignantly*): How do you mean—you got it out of the garage?

Teddie: Well, I thought there'd be a lot of bother, and it seemed to me the best thing would be for Elizabeth and me not to stand upon the order of our going, you know.

Por.: Do you mean to say you were going to steal my car?

Teddie: Hang it all, I couldn't carry Elizabeth all the way to London. She's so damned plump.

El.: You dirty dog!

Por. (*sputtering*): Well, well, well—(*Helplessly.*) I like him, Kitty; it's no use pretending I don't. I like him.

Lady K.: Oh, you dear things, how I envy you!

Teddie: Come, darling!

El.: But I can't go like this. (*She looks despairingly at her evening gown.*)

Teddie: Nonsense! Lady Kitty will lend you her cloak. Won't you?

Lady K.: You're capable of tearing it off my back if I don't. She must write a note for Arnold. I'll put it on her pincushion.

Teddie: Pincushion be blowed! Come, darling! We'll drive through the dawn and through the sunrise.

Elizabeth kisses Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous and then, hand in hand, she and Teddie go out into the night.

Lady K.: Oh, Hughie, how it all comes back to me! Will they suffer all we suffered? And have we suffered all in vain?

Por.: My dear, I don't know that in life it matters so much what you do as what you are. No one can learn by the experience of another, because no circumstances are quite the same. If we made rather a hash of things, perhaps it was because we were rather trivial people. You can do anything in this world if you're prepared to take the consequences, and consequences depend on character.

Clive Champion-Cheney *comes in, rubbing his hands. He is pleased as Punch.*

C.-C.: Well, I think I've settled the hash of that young man.

Por.: Whose hash are you talking about?

C.-C.: Mr. Edward Luton's, my dear Hughie. I told Arnold exactly what to do, and he's done it. What makes a prison? Why, bolts and bars. Remove them, and a prisoner won't want to escape. Clever, I flatter myself.

Por.: You were always that, Clive, but at the moment you're obscure.

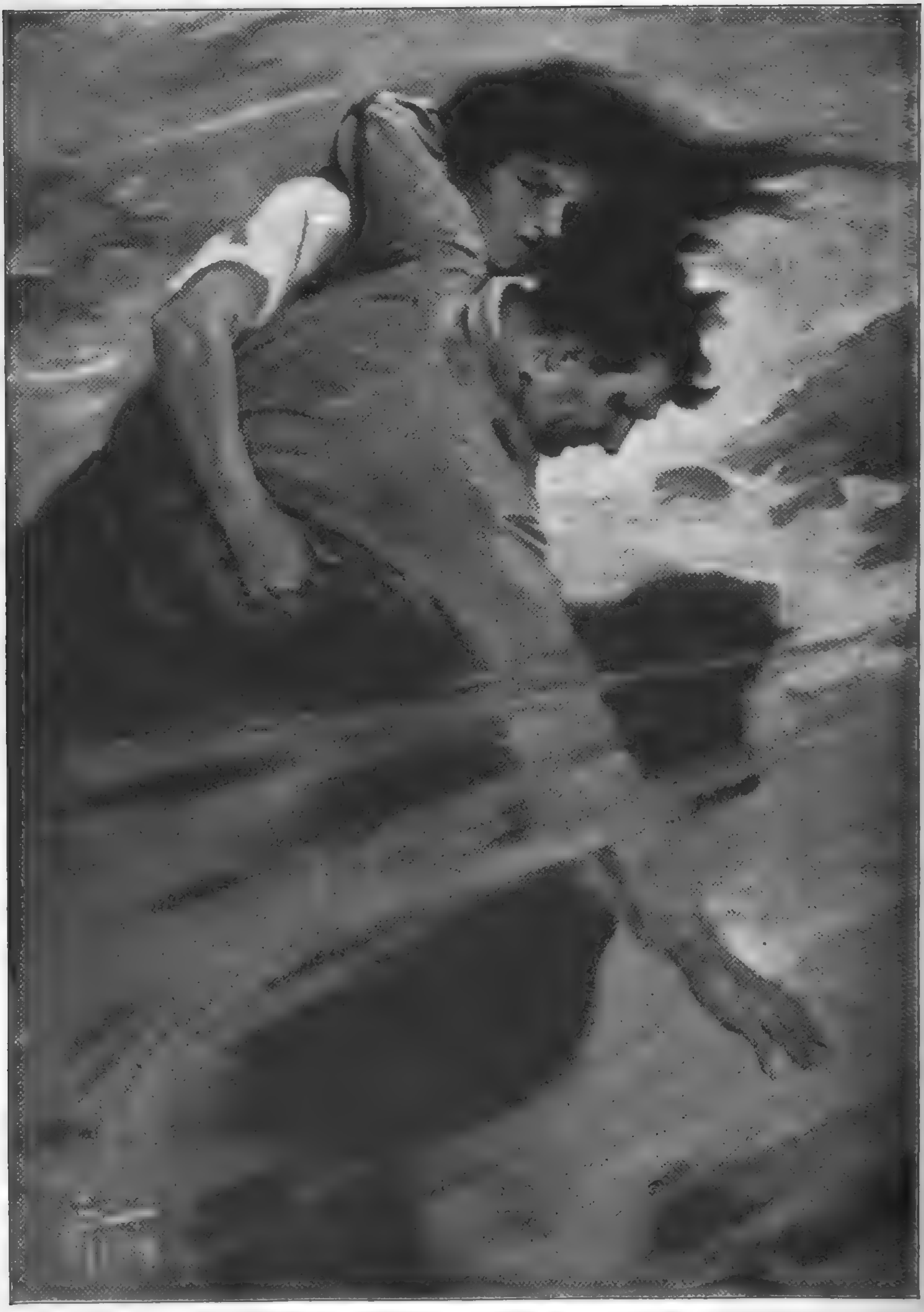
C.-C.: I told Arnold to go to Elizabeth and tell her she could have her freedom. I told him to sacrifice himself all along the line. I know what women are. The moment every obstacle was removed to her marriage with Teddie Luton, half the allurement was gone.

Lady K.: Arnold did that?

C.-C.: He followed my instructions to the letter. I've just seen him. She's shaken. I'm willing to bet five hundred pounds to a penny that she won't bolt.

He begins to laugh. *Lady Kitty* and *Lord Porteous* laugh, too. There is a certain gladness and tears, too, behind their laughter. Presently there is the sound of a car starting. The whir of the motor grows fainter and fainter and is shortly lost in their laughter.

Next month's play will be Clemence Dane's intense and moving drama, "A Bill of Divorcement," which is duplicating its London success in this country. See February Everybody's—out January 14th.



Clinging together, they staggered away into the night.

A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Bridge

How Often Have You Said to Yourself, "I'd Like to Get Away, Get Out of This—Find Something Different"? Why Not? It Is Only a Step from Prosaic Land to Adventure-Land. This Novel Shows the Way

By Marjorie L. C. Pickthall

Illustrations by Harry Fisk

MACLEAR was done with it all at last. Not another scrap of evidence to be destroyed, not another fact to be hidden, not another damning half-truth left to be told. Brant and Raynham were the only men who suspected that the central borings might have gone deeper; and they had worked for him like slaves. Now he could rest till the inquiry began with a quiet mind. The firm would come out of it well. He had seen to that.

He had not been alone for ten days. In the soul's craving for solitude he had forgotten the body's craving for rest. His one desire was to reach his office, shut the door, and think things out alone. Perhaps, if he could be alone, the noise in his head would stop. It had tormented him for a long time.

He was almost running when he turned in at the entrance of his office-building, hounded with a sudden fear of screaming in the street. It was time he relaxed the intolerable strain. He could have beaten the elevator-man into insensibility for that one glance that might have been curiosity—or pity. For, after all, the firm was safe. He would not think of the rest—or even admit it to himself.

He walked steadily enough down the corridor and stopped at the familiar door. He read the curved black and gold letters of his name upon it two or three times before he went in. Everything which had belonged to his daily life held now this arresting quality of strangeness.

No one looked up as he crossed the outer office. He was so nearly at the end of his endurance that he was grateful they spared him that. He had his hand on the door of his inner office when he saw that on the threshold lay a single white violet.

Something, some vivid prescience of fear, told him that Moira was here and that he was to be spared nothing. Nothing!

He opened that door and went in, shutting it behind him.

She was standing by the windows. She did not move at first, and for a moment he wondered to see her all in black. Then he remembered that of course she would be in black—for Gordon, his brother. He put his hands to his head. The crashing was growing very loud—hammers beating him down.

The room was very silent. It stood so high that the noise of traffic in the street beneath troubled it no more than the sound of a river troubles the stillness of a forest. But there was no silence for Maclear.

He knew that to meet Moira he must be strong as he had not been before. He must fail in nothing, yield nothing, admit no crack in his armor of justification. For, after all, he had done no more than a hundred other men. Why should he pay when a hundred others, with less excuse, went free? He had been betrayed by circumstance; luck had been bitterly against him. That was all. He must remember it.

In a moment he must speak. He must tell her that the firm would be sure to come out of the investigation with an unblemished reputation, thanks to his own energy. There had been nothing else in the world to work for these last days. He had worked for it. Now there was nothing else left in the world to say. But he could not say it.

Thoughts and words enough were in his mind, a torrent, without cohesion. He bit them back. They were nothing after all but business details, technical arguments with which, hour after hour, day after day he had confronted and refuted in his own soul. They had served with men. They would not serve with this woman.

SHE came slowly toward him. He saw nothing but the knot of faded white flowers she wore, the one relief in the unbroken black of her widowhood. She saw that they were faded and dying, each petal rimmed with brown. Seeing his gaze, her hand went up and touched them softly.

"Gordon was bringing them to me." Her voice was level and quiet. "They found the little box in his pocket, and thought I would like to have them. It's as new as all that," she said, "as new as all that."

She was near him. He had to raise his eyes at last from the flowers to his sister-in-law's face.

And in an instant the coverings of defense were stripped from him. They withered like leaves in a fire, leaving him with an intolerable consciousness of nakedness. There was no defense.

She knew!

He could not move his eyes from her face; he could not stir. He felt life itself withdrawing from his limbs, centering in one anguished point of receptivity. He had never known that grief came with this stillness, or that it was like this to be judged.

"You have suffered very much. You can't have saved more than a few thousands. Was it worth it?"

He tried to tell her that that was not the point—not the point—that he was clean in intention, that life, fate, chance had deliberately fouled his hands. The thing was done every day. But he could not speak.

"There were three others besides him. But I can't think of any one but Gordon. Not yet. God wouldn't expect it yet. And then there's me."

"Moira! You know I'd die to give him back to you!"

"I am sure of it, Alan. You loved him in your way. You were always very good to us, to Gordon and to me. I suppose that seemed so far apart from your work, from—what do you call it?—dodging a specification. Men, I suppose, do these things."

Men do these things. Men, it seems, fall full-length on the floor and catch the hem of a black dress and hide their faces there. Well— She looked down on him without any change in the calm white face above the dying white flowers; only, where his dark hair touched her shoe, she drew her foot away.

"It's done sometimes, I suppose, and nothing happens. I don't know much about these things. But if you'd needed money, Alan, I'd have lent you some. I've plenty of that. And so gladly."

"Moira—before God—I reckoned everything—left a wide margin of safety——"

She listened carefully to the broken voice. She said, "But the bridge fell."

Maclear wondered why he had wanted to be alone, to think things out. Because no thought could ever lighten the darkness of that accomplished fact. There rose in him, with his despair, a bitter hatred of life that had so betrayed him.

"I've tried—I've prayed—to be just to you, Alan. He would have wished it. I have not realized things very much yet. I have felt all along that I must defend you, fight hard for you. And I have. Not a breath shall ever shadow you through me. But it is going to be very hard. There's something in myself I can't defend you from. We loved you, Gordon and I. We were so proud of you. He thought the world of you. He said once, 'Alan's hard, but he's true as steel.' Sometimes, when I wake in the morning, I can't believe it yet; I can't get things right in my mind. Will you give me the truth now, yourself, without any evasion or excuse? It is almost the last thing you will ever do for me."

"Yes."

"Behind everything, isn't it the fact that you didn't run the foundations of the central spans deep enough? I don't know the technicalities. But you saved on the contract that way, didn't you? And it seemed all right. Only, somehow, the sand got in, and the river followed the sand. And the train went through— Is this true?"

"Quite true."

"You do not ask me how I came to know."

Said the man at her feet: "I have fought, with every bit of me, body and soul, to keep it a secret. For the sake of the firm. I thought it was safe— But perhaps—one of those four—rose from the dead to tell you?"

She was weeping; not, he knew, for the dead, but for him, for the living. "It was that poor boy Oldershaw, your clerk, who hinted something weeks ago. He was boasting of you. He thought you so clever. I stopped him. I never told Gordon."

"Did you come here to tell me this?"

"Yes. We believed in your truth. I wanted it from you once more And something else. Alan—Gordon's brother, that he loved so dearly—I want—some day—to be able to forgive you. I want so terribly to be able to forgive you. But I can't do it yet. Not yet. You are the nearest thing to Gordon that is left in the world. And yet there's that feeling for you, here, like hate. I dread that it would come to that between us. But if I don't see you for a long while, for years, perhaps some day, when we are old and near the end of all this sorrow, I'll be able to meet you again in the way he would wish me to, in the old way he would like."

"Forgive *me?*"

Again, from that solemn distance, her voice reached him. "Did you know him so little as to think *he* wouldn't forgive?"

For a little time thought and feeling were broken in Maclear. He did not speak. He knew she was going, that he might never see her again in this life, and of all women in the world she, perhaps, had been the most purely dear to him. But he had nothing to say.

She had not quite gone. He thought she stooped over him, though she shrank from him; her approach and her repulsion would both, he knew, return in memory and unbearable pain. But now he felt nothing, though the touch of her pity was on him, and the whisper of it: "Poor Alan! Poor Cain!" Then the door shut softly. He was alone, as he had desired to be.

He stayed there on the floor a long time. The sun was behind the tall buildings on the other side of the street and their shadow darkened his room. Everything was silent. The staff had gone home. After hesitating a moment, Maclear found his hat and went out, too.

He went down the stairs—eight flights—but he seemed to be immediately in the street. Space was opaque to him, the distance lost in mist; he saw men as trees walking. The crashing in his brain never stopped. It confused and benumbed him, seeming one with the mist. Only the passage of late newsboys now and then rent these shadows with intolerable clearness as they ran by shouting: "Bersimis Bridge disaster. Full details. Who was to blame? Inquiry promised." He walked on.

He had at first no thought of where he was going. He was looking for some place of refuge from the memory and the knowledge that went with him everywhere, that clung inseparably to his soul like a revolting deformity to the body. Moira's dreadful pity had branded him inescapably with a remorse he yet strove to deny; since in mind and will he had been innocent.

HE WALKED on, walked on. The electric street-lamps added their stars to the blue-purple dusk. He left the business quarter of the town and wandered by older streets. All these ways were familiar to him. He had been born in this city, grown with its great growth. It was like walking back into his own life. In that building he had held his first job; in that house set back from the road, where two maples heaved mounds of motionless darkness against the dim stars, they had lived for two years, that he might be near the technical school. In that larger house with the concrete steps his father had died. Round the corner, in a house with a funny tower, Gordon had had diphtheria. On another street had lived a family at whose home he and Gordon had spent many hours; and here Gordon had met Moira, and Maclear had been half in love with her himself. And here——

Maclear stopped. This was the shuttered, blinded house where she and Gordon had lived.

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

He turned and went away. He wondered why his feet had led him here. Everywhere he went, there was some thought of Gordon, some picture of Gordon, his ugly, sweet face under its reddish thatch smiling from the night.

The white light and black shadow of the summer night submerged him for hours. He walked now in streets that are never quite empty, the oldest streets of the city, down by the water-front.

He went on, under the dusty branches of old chestnut trees which roofed the stir and strife away from the stars. He went on through dark alleys of old warehouses. The smells of Italian cooking yielded to the scent of raw hemlock planks and overripe fruit. He came to the high gleam and shadow of grain-elevators, towering in the night, to houses that were half afloat, boats that were half on land. It was a silent place. The noises of the foreign quarter had fallen far behind. Pausing to listen intently, he could hear a slow sigh. It was the wash of lake water among hundreds of piles. The sound was soft as sleep. It was all about him as he went on and on to the end of a long wharf, where a single lantern confronted an infinity of shadows and of stars.

Maclear knew this place also.

There was a shed on the end of the wharf. Maclear leaned against it. He could hear the warm air fingering in the funnel-stays of a moored tug. He could not fairly see the surface of the water—only the lantern's golden reflection flickering in invisibility.

He knew now why he had come here.

He stumbled down the wharf, a black shadow. He crossed railway lines gleaming in the dew, and crept the length of a string of freight-cars on a siding. Another wharf opened before him between dim water lanes. Freight-sheds were on one hand, ships along on the other. An arched sign bore the words, "Maclear & Co."

And there before him at the end of things was lying a silver ship.

She lay in the full glare of an arc swinging from a high pole. The light painted her silver to her mastheads, beautiful on the face of the night—an old lake schooner loading stone.

"The *Martine Messier*," said Maclear. "She was to have been broken up soon."

He could not have explained why he had recollected the old ship, or what affinity had drawn him to her; perhaps it lay in that one word, "broken."

He was alongside, looking down on a deck silvered with the dust of stone. After a moment, he hailed. He hailed again. Some one came from shadow into the white light and looked up at him.

"Garroch," said Maclear.

"Sir! Mr. Maclear!"

Amazement and something of horror sharpened the old voice. Maclear said quickly—he felt he must be quick,

"Who's on board with you?"

"Levett, and my nephew from the townships."

"Enough to raise sail. Is there any wind outside?"

"Some, I doubt, but——"

"Rouse them up. You could tow out to it in the dingey. Never mind the cargo. I—can't wait, Garroch. I must go—must go—anywhere where I won't hear the bridge, Garroch! Anywhere where I can forget!"

The old man had his foot on the bulwark and cleared the jump to the wharf like a boy. In his arms Maclear lay—broken at last, like his bridge.

VERY slowly, through a still evening, the *Martine Messier* was standing in to shore.

The wind which so softly drifted the old schooner onward was not strong enough to ruffle the surface of the water. As the sun sank, the great lake turned luminous, lost all bounds, became another roseate heaven. Between these clarities the ship hung, black as grief, moving to a shore drawn in sudden black along the lessening gold.

Then the sun dipped. Again the schooner was gray as a gull in the gray twilight of the north. The island ahead was again a shadow. As they neared the land, that shadow breathed on them a full, sweet scent of flowers.

When they came to anchor, the twilight still held. Maclear said, "Put me ashore here."

They hauled in the dingey towing astern. Maclear lowered himself into it. Garroch followed him and took the oars. They pulled toward the land.

Presently, with no more than a sigh, the boat took the beach. Maclear stepped from it and walked slowly along the sand. He saw nothing else.

Inland were low dunes crested with grass, ground-willows and thin poplars. Between him and the dunes stretched a ribbon of marsh, mooned all along with the moth-blurred disks of the evening primroses. It was from here the sweetness had come.

He knew, if he walked the island's length, he would probably find nothing but more sand, willows, poplars, the flowers and fragrance of the little marshes. No more silent place could have been imagined, nor one more remote.

He went slowly back to Garroch.

"This is the place. I'll stay here. You know what to do."

Garroch put back to the schooner, leaving Maclear on the beach.

Far into the night the twilight held. When the dingey returned, loaded with supplies and camping-stuff which Maclear had bought at a port on the way up the lakes, the men found him asleep with his cheek to the sand. They were used to it; he had slept a great deal, in a sick way, aboard the schooner. Even when they raised a small tent and spread blankets, and lifted and laid him there, he did not wake.

These things done, they returned on board. They had their orders. Garroch carried a letter to Raynham, giving him full authority in the business, telling him enough. Maclear wanted no letters forwarded. He wished to be consulted in nothing. He wanted to lapse out of life for a little while. Raynham would understand. It would be convenient to tell other acquaintances that he was threatened with a nervous breakdown, and had gone camping. That would do. In two months, the *Martine Messier* would return for him.

MORNING after morning rose supremely from the hazed sea-line, drowned the world in golden heats, and passed in winged red cirrus or towering cumulus marching the long horizons. Never had there been such peace or such fair weather. The lake-bosom breathed—no more.

Maclear shared in this stillness.

In all his life he had experienced neither leisure nor physical loneliness. Now these two things laid their hands on him, and he thought he would be healed.

As he trained his mind, so he trained his body. He swam, walked, lay in the sun, all with the thought of so increasing his power of resistance to the past. As he was proud of his ability to dwell on the little existences of the marsh and the lake, so he was proud of every slightest physical sensation of rest or enjoyment, and overlooked no one of them. The pleasure of the cold sand under his bare feet as he stepped from his tent in the morning, the thrill when his body passed from the warm surface-water to the depth that never loses its icy cold, his delight in the scent of the wax-white spiral orchises then beginning to blossom along the marshes—all these he counted and credited to himself, proofs of his own strength.

As his bodily strength was renewed, Maclear felt a supreme inner mastery of himself. He was without fear, without haste. He counted time only by the slow advances, the slow recessionals of nature. He filled his days in this way. His nights were absolute blanks of quiet and dreamless sleep. After he had been a couple of weeks on the island, if any one had asked him, he would have said that he had forgotten about the bridge, in the sense in which he intended to forget.

Day after day the motionless bright weather held, and his clear days and blank nights with it.

Then bands of cirrus rose in the sky. The water grew milky under them, iridescent, as if oil had been spilled. At long intervals an undulation heaved the surface, and broke on the beaches with a sullen, unexpected thunder. It left a rope of green weed, gray shells, little fish and drowned butterflies mile after mile along those tideless shores. Drying, this drift smelled of desolation. Then came the wind.

After the first, the wind did not come in gusts. It came like a wall, an immense advance out of space. The storm was of wind only. It lifted the sand as if with hands. The air was full of driving sand, a level, scorching, impalpable fog. It was as if the whole island would be spun and carded away, scattered on the wind, strewn on the lake.

The wind had a strange effect on Maclear. It loosed his hold on peace, on the newly acquired moorings of his soul. It filled him with intolerable restlessness. It drove him from his camp to wander before it all day, blown and carded like the sand.

It was as if the earth itself rose against him to cast him out in this storm of smallest particles that clogged his feet, choked his breath, scourged, blinded and perpetually escaped him. The ground was elusive as water. There was no firm standing anywhere.

The island was riddled with channels of angry foam. Spume whitened the still lagoons; the inlets frothed among the marsh-meadows and the fringed-gentian beds. Maclear passed from land to water, from water to land, without knowing. But most terrible of all was the running of the sand.

All day he was a fugitive before it.

With the evening, light broke for a moment through the dry, racing clouds—light of colorless brilliance, fierce as steel. The wind held the grass rigid as iron. The blowing dunes showed like clouds, transparent in the wild gleam. Maclear came to another beach; he had crossed the island.

ON THIS beach a woman stood, blown about with foam, gazing toward the coming night. The gleam clothed her in its own heatless fire. She seemed a bright beckoning flame in the flux of existence. To her Maclear went. He struggled for reasonable, commonplace words; but his need spoke for him.

"Hold me," said Maclear; "hold me fast."

He knew that she turned and looked at him. He saw her face, strange and beautiful between bands of spray-sleeked hair. She did not speak. But divine communication was surely in the gesture with which she stretched her hands and drew him toward her. He rested at last at her side. Her arm was about him. She held him fast against all his storms.

He had no thought at all but that it was good to rest so, near the beating of her heart.

He looked into her face. The light made it golden, wonderful. Simply as a child, he asked her, "Who are you?"

"I am Sombra."

The gleam died.

"Where are you?"

"I am here, holdin' you."

"It's dead dark. I can't see you. But I can feel your arms. Don't let me go."

"I won't let you go."

"Are these your hands brushing the sand from my face?"

"Yes. You fainted—or something like. I couldn't lift you, so I stayed with you. If I'd gone for help, I'd never have found you again. The sand would have buried you."

"Don't leave me to the sand."

"Trust me," said the voice from the night. "I won't leave you."

Again, after a time, Maclear said, "Where are you?"

"Here."

The voice came more faintly. He thought it was receding into the wind. He put up his hand and touched the chill curve of a cheek. He could see nothing at all, but he felt it to be wet with tears.

"Why are you crying?"

"Oh, what am I to do? How am I to save you? The sand and the wind are makin' me weak. I can't even keep your face from the drift no more!"

She was speaking with her face close to his, that he might hear. He said, struggling to be free of the weariness that lay on him,

"Is there anywhere to go—away from this?"

"Yes, yes! If you could move—if you could walk——"

He fought to his knees, to his feet. In the pitch dark he sought for her hands, found and held them. They sustained him. He said, "Come."

The voice out of the wind cried faintly: "I can't till you help me. The sand's over me like a grave."

He mastered his lassitude of flesh and soul, stooped, freed her garments of the iron-heavy drift, drew her erect beside him. Clinging together, they staggered away into the night.

Maclear thought of nothing but that the place where she had held him, where he had rested in her arms, was even now lost and blotted out, that he would never be able to find it or return to it.

By and by he heard her saying, "Can you hear anything?"

"No."

Again she asked him, "Can you hear a sound?"

"What sound?"

"A sound as if the wind was blowin' in a great empty shell?"

"I think so."

They went on. Presently she said: "Yes; I hear it. It's the wind in Mornin' House, and that's my home. We'll be safe now."

In time they reached a flight of steps, half buried in sand. Before him, in the night, Maclear was aware of a greater darkness, stretching immeasurably, and made visible only by a single thread of light, a thin finger of whirling sand. He heard, too, a low continuous sound of the utmost desolation—the sound of the wind crying in a wilderness of empty rooms.

Then the pressure of the wind-storm suddenly released him. The girl had led him through a door.

To Maclear there was an exquisite homeliness in the room with its wooden walls, black stove, yellow wooden chairs and table with a worn blue cloth. A lamp with a yellow shade stood on the table, and its circle of light painted vividly upon shadow the dark face of a boy who sat there, and who looked up as they entered, crying, "Sombra!"

At the cry, an old man came from the shade beyond the lamplight. He was so tall his head was in shadow. Shavings clung like flakes of light to his worn sleeves as he rested his great hands on the table, saying softly, "Who's that breathing there beside ye?"

"A man I brought in from the storm."

The girl's voice came faintly. No one else spoke or moved for a minute. Then the old man began to advance softly round the table, feeling his way. All was so suddenly still Maclear could hear the faint rasp of his knotted fingers passing over the cloth. He knew then that this old man was blind.

The blind face came into the circle of light. Then Maclear would have cried out. For there was death in that face, death in that outstretched groping hand, death and indestructible hate in the soul that drove the great aged body down upon him with the slow, inevitable motion of shadow or cloud.

And he could not cry or move.

His senses again shrank and dwindled to an aching point, a single apprehension, focused on that advancing hand.

All happened in silence. Since the girl had spoken, no one of them had done so. And now it was in apathetic silence that the tall boy who had been sitting at the table came and set himself in the old man's path. There was something horrible to see in the way the searching hand closed on him. Maclear saw him gripped, shaken, dragged from the room, cast out—and could not stir. And the boy suffered it passively as a log, without one gesture of resistance or any change in his dark and secret face.

He thought, when the boy had been cast out, that the old man came back quietly and fell to work again in his dim corner. But he was not sure.

Later, he thought he heard some one weeping beside him. But he was not sure of that, either, because of the ceaseless running of the sand on the roof over his head.

THE veranda of Morning House was a hundred feet long. Floored with wood, the boards were everywhere thrust aside by willow bushes which had grown up from the hollow beneath, in other places had rotted away. Every board was scoured to the grain by the action of the sand that heaped the whole length of it in snowlike drifts. The wooden roof had fallen, too, in many places, and at each seam let in the blue of heaven or the rain.

Over both the front and the back doors a wooden sign from which the paint had long been blistered still bore a shadow of the words: "Morning House. M. Ransome, Proprietor."

Long ago, in the prosperous times of Port Tallis, the place had been built for a summer hotel.

But before any guests had come to Morning House, the curse of the sand had fallen on Port Tallis. Some of the slow uncharted lake currents shifted; the harbor silted up in a year or two; ships called there no more; the people began to leave the little frame houses among the moving hills of sand. By and by the lighthouse was removed, leaving nothing but its round concrete foundation out in the shallows for the gulls to fish from. Only Mait Ransome was left, living on in his empty hotel, and hearing year by year the advance-guard of the sand whispering in his hollow rooms.

Morning House had known but two guests. The last of the two was Alan Maclear.

He came down the steps of Morning House early one summer day, and followed a path thad led to the lagoon in front of it.

Sombra was standing barefooted in the shallow blue water, sailing a toy boat. Half a score others lay on the sand, waiting their turn. For to this Mait Ransome's strength had come. He made toy boats for the stores in the town, and Sombra tested them.

She did not smile as she turned her head and saw him. But behind her dark beauty a glow dawned like the glow of the sky.

SHE was tall and of a noble strength, and young—not more than eighteen. Her black braids framed an oval face, tanned almost to the color of gold. Her mouth was rather large, but it had the hue and the texture of certain dark roses. Her brows were very black, and had the languid arch of the sickle, so rarely seen, and the eyes under them were splendid. She waded ashore to Maclear abruptly, and it could be seen that these two had often talked together.

"Do you know that I've been here nearly a month," he asked her, "and that I've never thanked you for letting me stay?"

"There was no need. There's rooms enough—forty and more, not countin' the down-stairs. Why shouldn't you come to us when your camp was washed away? We're the only folk left on the island. Why shouldn't you stay if you're content with the poor stuff we c'n give you?" Suddenly there were tears in her eyes. "I'd give you better if I could," she said.

More than her strength or her beauty, this humility in her moved him. Another man might have taken her in his arms, told her his heart. But Maclear was hard. The time was not yet ripe to him; he yet doubted, delayed. But he knew that if he could love any woman in the world, this girl was she.

He answered gently, "There could be nothing better for me than what you give—what you have given." He thought of what yet she might give, and the blood flushed his face. "That night when I first came to you, and said, 'Hold me,' and you held me in your arms——"

They looked gravely at each other. Hitherto, that night had not been spoken of between them; now, at the appointed time, it came to light, to words. Those words seemed to weave them together with invisible strands. Maclear had known it would be so. He was content to leave the unfolding of his passion to those influences of the place to which he had utterly surrendered himself.

"That night, Sombra, I came to you in great trouble."

"I knew."

"You gave me the only rest I have known from it."

"All trouble's the better for something to hold to. Comfort just comes to that—a hand held out. When the trouble's bad, it don't matter whose it is."

"Mine was bad trouble——"

He broke off abruptly. His need again had spoken for him, said more, perhaps, than he had intended to say. But as he looked at her, his eyes burned with a flame that lighted a grave, innocent light in her own.

He said, in a quick, rough voice, "Sombra, if you knew—that night I came to you in the storm—that I'd done something very bad, very dreadful—would you still have held me in your arms?"

He waited without stirring for her answer, his blue eyes intent. It came slowly.

"If you're to help, if you're to give comfort, it don't do to think of more than the givin', or maybe the chance'll go. The want of it's all. The giving's all. The rest don't matter." She looked away. He saw her lips tremble. "I never thought of things like this till you came."

He was trembling a little when he said, still with that fierce and angry earnestness,

"Sombra, I'd done nothing bad—nothing with a bad intent."

She turned her face to him again. She was faintly smiling.

"What I did had a terrible result. But I'm innocent of that result. Life turned against me. It was like using a tool, and having it slip and cut your hand. Yes; like that. I did it. But I'm not guilty of the result."

He had been speaking to something that was not Sombra. When she said softly, "I believe you," he remembered her. His eyes rested on her. The storm died out of him. He said, a little unsteadily:

"You held me. Sombra, what were you doing on the beach that night?"

"Often I go to that beach in a storm. I think, suppose another ship was to come ashore there, and no light, and no one by."

"Another ship?"

She was silent a moment, then:

"My father's was wrecked there in a spring blow, comin' up from carryin' fruit in the Gulf, to take on the excursion trade on the Lakes at the openin' of navigation. A few years back you could still see some of it, out there on the ledge. But it was an iron ship. There's nothing left now."

He said nothing. In his presence she had always been reticent—a little shy, a little proud. He had never questioned her, though the household at the ruinous hotel had given him enough cause for curiosity. He had been content to wait for that knowledge too; sure that the impersonal powers to which he had made over his own will would in their time unfold it.

"The boat struck there on the shoal. Nothin' come ashore but my father and some pulped oranges. The beach was yellow with them for miles. The hotel was nearly finished then, and my mother—she was first cousin to Mait—was helpin' him to run it. They took my father there. He was sick a long time. He couldn't work nor talk much English, but he could sing so you could hear him 'way out on the fishin'-ground. At the end of the summer my mother was married to him. At the end of that winter he died.

"Next fall, Sal and me were born. We're twins. But mother didn't live long after. I've thought of them two so much—so much—seems as if I knew why she died." Her voice sank to a breath. "He come like the sun. He went like the sun. It was too *cold* for her to live without him.

"He's buried in a little graveyard back among the sand-hills. One day I'll show you. It ain't been used for years. His stone's the only one standin' now. 'J. M. Luz,' it has on it, 'beloved husband of Martha Ransome, aged 28 years. *His banner over me was love.*' I've heard she had ter'ble trouble to get that tex' on the stone. They said it wasn't in the Bible. But it was. That was the last thing she minded about. Theirs was a short day."

"But a summer one."

She looked at him softly. "Thank you. You always put things right for me."

"Then your name is not Ransome?"

"No. This was my father's name." She stooped and wrote slowly on the sand, "Juan-Maddalena Luz." She went on: "My name's Sombra Luz. Sal's is Salvator Luz. But we're mostly called Ransome."

"Strange names, Sombra, for Tallis Island."

She said simply, "Father, he wanted mother to use one or the other, not thinkin' she'd have a call for both."

He watched her as she stooped again and passed her hand over the writing in the sand. Even so, he thought, had death blotted out the owner of the name, that man of the South who had come up from fruit-loading along the Floridas, been wrecked on Tallis Island, and died after setting up his banner over the heart of Martha Ransome. What currents, he wondered, of snow and sun, shadow and fire might be mingled in this girl whose name was both shadow and light?

Sombra went on, with a timid kind of pride that escaped him: "Mait's real well educated. And Sal and me have had schoolin'. There was a school kep' on here for a long while, and we've studied a little since."

For his thought burned on his lips, "Sombra, how beautiful you are!"

She glowed to greater beauty as he said it.

AND of a sudden, he was sure of her; her soft surrendered eyes told him that he had only to ask and she would give—greatly. He guessed that, for all her reticence, the genius for giving was hers, as the genius for art or for work might be another's. But he had not yet the assurance of due time; of himself he was not yet quite sure. The instinct for possession was strong in him. So, also, was the instinct of mastery. He would not possess at all until he could possess utterly.

He stretched out his hand gently, lifted and held one of her long black braids still sparkling with water. It lay across his open palm. But it seemed to her that she had not strength enough to free her hair; to him, that he had not strength enough to let it go.

"I have never forgotten that first day at Morning House, Sombra. Do you remember? I came down from the room in which you and Sal had put me, not knowing what I would find. And I found you standing at the kitchen door. The blue lake was behind you, and the foam, and the sun on the sand and the poplar trees. You held a sand-swallow in your hands. As I watched, it flashed away, a little dark streak, into the light; and then you turned and smiled and saw me. You told me that the swallow had been blown into the hall overnight, and that you'd kept it in your work-box near the stove, and now that it was well, it had gone. And I said, 'Then there's more than one hurt thing you've sheltered from the storm.' Later, I talked to Mait. And when I spoke to you, you said, 'Stay.' Perhaps you meant this hurt thing to stay, too, till it was well."

She did not answer except with the pure compassion of her eyes.

"I should like to see real diamonds in your hair, Sombra. Not these water diamonds. I should like to dress you in silk the color of the deep water out there beyond the shoal—or in honey-gold, the color of that little rose you have in your garden—or all in white."

His voice sank. She was pale, glancing down timidly at her bare brown feet, her shabby skirt, the cheap cotton blouse that strained against the swell of the breast. She seemed very mean in her own sight.

"You are like a golden rose. And you've been growing here in the sand for years."

He was held by the miracle of her mere physical bloom and perfection in such a place. But she answered his last words.

"Yes. I've been here all my life. When my mother died, Mait took us, for he was her nearest kin, and the Ransomes always hold together—for pride. But—" For a moment a shadow, a reflection like the reflection of fear from some other face, darkened hers. Maclear's silence yet questioned her. Lifting her eyes, she said in a low voice: "But he hates us. Don't ask me how I know. I know. We remind him. He loved my mother before my father came. Don't ask me how I know that, either. I *know*. And he hated my father. And he hates us.

"He hates Sal more'n me—feelin' my father more in him. He's been ter'ble hard on Sal. Oftentimes it's been in my heart to quit, for Sal's sake. But after all, he's kep' us, and worked to do it. I couldn't quit him—not altogether. And Sal won't quit me.

"When he'd his sight, 'twasn't so bad, though often he'd fall into such a rage he'd go crazy, and seem 'most ready to kill Sal. But as he grew old, and his sight failed, and his stren'th, he come to think of nothin' else but what was past. His mind ain't just right, for all he's so quiet and so clever with the little boats. Whenever there's a storm, Mait goes back in his mind to the one in which my father's boat was wrecked. He looks to see the men carry my father in, and my mother go to him and take his head on her knees. Perhaps Mait does see it—in the dark. That night, when I brought you in, he thought you was my father—come back from the storm."

"Then it was to save me that your brother put himself in Mait's way?"

She smiled tremulously, though there were tears in her eyes. "We always have to do that, when the storm's real heavy. It seems then as if Mait'd have no rest—go quite mad—unless he could get at my father to turn him out. So Sal goes and gets in his way, and he puts Sal out, and quiets down. Sal, he just goes in at the back door again—" Once more her eyes darkened; her brown hands went with passion to her heart. "But sometimes—oh, sometimes, Mr. Maclear, I'm afraid! I'm afraid of Sal. It looks—sometimes—as if Mait was standin' in front of a glass he couldn't see into when he stands in front of Sal, and as if that glass was givin' him back his own crazy hate from my brother's face. Then—then I'm afraid. I see nothin' but grief."

Maclear was silent. He lifted the black hair that lay across his hand and pressed it to his lips, dropped it, and for that day let her go.

"THERE'S a run of herring in the shoal water. I'm goin' to spear some from the ledge. Will you like to come?"

The voice was Salvator's. Maclear paused a minute in astonishment; the boy had hitherto been so unapproachable, so watchfully wild; then he said, "Yes, thanks; I'll come."

Sal turned down the passage and Maclear followed him. They kept close to the wall with its row of closed and rotting doors, for the flooring in the center was unsafe; and Maclear felt that wall and doors were alike coated with a scum of sand.

Outside, Sal gave him his fish-spear—which was no more than a large steel fork bound to a stick—and a bundle of frayed willow roots tied together and dipped in oil or tar to form a torch. They went down to the beach together. By the ledge of rock, crested with sand, which here thrust out from shore as straight as a groyne, Sal stopped. Maclear took off his shoes while Sal lighted the smoky torches.

In the low moonlight, Tallis Island lay like stilled waves of shadow and silver. Not a leaf moved. Pewits cried sadly from the inner marshes. The lake was a rippleless cloth of silver, running for miles, whispering at the rim. Under the lee of the ledge, where the herring had shoaled, it flashed perpetually, a brighter flickering silver of the sides of leaping fish. Maclear and Sal, each carrying a spear and a torch, waded out along the narrow ledge.

Maclear was held there, less by the sport, if such it could be called, than by the beauty of the night and the desire to establish some sort of comradeship with Sal. By and by he gave up spearing on his own account and watched Sal.

He said, when the basket was full and the boy rejoined him on the sand, "You've speared about three times as many as I have."

The dark eyes—so like, so unlike Sombra's—rested on him indifferently. Sal only said, "Will we go back now?"

"The night's too fine to leave. Shall we have a swim?"

"All right."

"I'll race you to that rock out there."

Sal did not answer. Where the ledge joined the beach, he thrust the two torches into the sand. They sent up a blur of reddened smoke upon the pearly night.

BEYOND the torches, out on the ledge, Sal and Maclear slipped off their clothes. Maclear saw on the boy's body old bruises; he knew some of them had been taken on that night when he first went to Morning House and Sal had set himself in the way of Mait Ransome's groping hands. He was moved. For a moment he reached after an inner meaning in the apparent fact that escaped him. Then they dived together. And he forgot everything in the foreseen delight of the cool water racing along his limbs.

Maclear touched the rock, turned, and swam back. He could not keep up with Sal. When he came to the ledge, the boy was standing on it, glittering in the moonlight, and stooping to give Maclear a hand out.

Maclear said, pulling on his trousers: "I thought I could swim. But I wonder how many yards you could give me in a quarter-mile."

Again the obscure dark eyes rested on him indifferently. Sal answered, "It's all I c'n do—swim."

"You do that well."

"It's not much. There's other things I'd like to be able to do. But I've never had a chance at learnin' 'em." Suddenly he turned on Maclear, with a movement so quick it was almost threatening. He asked, "C'n you wrestle?"

"Yes."

"And box?"

"I used to box a great deal at one time."

There was an odd silence. Then Salvator drew a sharp breath. His lean, tanned chest lifted as if he sobbed. The blood ran to his dark cheeks; his eyes glowed, softly eager. He seemed in that instant to come alive, as though before he had been dead.

Maclear watched. The likeness to Sombra almost hurt him. He said, smiling at this young eagerness, "Would you like me to show you how?"

"You—you— Would you show me?"

Maclear laughed aloud.

"Now, if you like. The moon gives us light enough, and the sand makes soft falling."

The coat he had taken up to put on he laid on the rocks again. Sal's eyes burned on him. There was no sound but the cry of the pewits. He nodded, and the boy advanced, his hands awkwardly raised.

"Mr. Maclear!"

"Well?"

"Let's have it this way." The intent, secret gaze never left Maclear's face. "You see them torches?"

Behind them, at the end of the ledge, the two torches yet flared smokily, like spots of anger on the silver purity of the night.

"Yes."

"Let's have it like this: You try to pass them torches. I'll try to stop you."

"All right."

They began. For a time there was no

sound but the light motion of their feet in the sand, Maclear's curt directions, and the wail of the unseen birds.

Then Maclear said, "You mustn't let me hit you so much."

Sal had fallen back. He listened with his old guarded look. He said, "I was waitin'."

"What for?"

"My chance of gettin' in a real blow. I'm used to bein' hit."

"Well—you wait too long. Come."

Sal advanced again. He asked, "Are you any nearer them torches?"

After a moment, Maclear said, "No; I am not."

Sal did not speak. They began again.

THE boy made no defense save that he clumsily shielded his head. He simply barred Maclear's way with his body, and suffered the blows mutely. Maclear wearied of this opposing inertia, this soft, dumb resistance. It was like fighting the sand. Something—the hour, the silence, the boy's strange apathy, which seemed yet to conceal something formidable—touched his nerves. He dropped his guard a moment without thought, saw, simultaneously, the dull face flame to sudden white life; then came the blow.

It was so savage, so fierce, that it might have been fatal had it come from a man quite full-grown. It seemed that only the ferocity of a devil could have driven it across a space of ten inches so hard to the point of Maclear's chin. As it was, his knees gave and he went down. He was up again almost instantly, sick and numbed, his good will outraged. For neither recklessness nor ignorance could excuse the quality of that blow.

He would not trust himself to speak. He picked up his coat and turned toward the beach where the stumps of the torches smoked. He lifted his hand to send Sal out of the way—into the water, for all he cared, for a cooling. Though all the time he knew that the heat was his own, that Sal was cold and watchful; and the knowledge added to his bewilderment. He took three steps, and Sal slipped under his raised arm and closed.

They swayed a moment and went down together.

Whatever incomprehensible purpose lay behind all this—and Maclear was assured of a purpose—he did not want to hurt this lad so piercingly like Sombra. But his temper was rising. He was fighting it more than he was fighting Sal.

They strained on the ledge, half in the water, in dead silence. The attack had been so unexpected that Maclear was underneath. He saw Sal's face above him, eager, yet infinitely removed, absorbed in some secret preoccupation. Then he put out his strength, turned, and rose, trying to break free. But Sal rose with him, clinging stubbornly. Again Maclear loosened that hold. But it closed on him elsewhere, ineffectual, yet inescapable. He broke away at last, and, as the boy staggered, slipped forward a foot and tripped him. Sal caught at Maclear's arms and pulled him down, too. They twisted again in the sand, close-locked. Maclear felt a faint shock of uneasiness, almost of fear. One would have thought they were fighting for life, the boy was so persistent, so insensible, so relentless. His mind went again to the sand—to the clinging, choking, yielding, unyielding sand.

He said through his teeth:

"I warn you. When my chance comes, I shall hit you without mercy!"

There was no answer. The tense struggle did not relax. Sal's look was still informed with purpose, still, in some way not to be explained, remote. Maclear knew he must end it. With an effort he broke free, sprang back, and, as the boy plunged blindly forward to clinch again, he struck without mercy, as he had promised.

Sal tossed his arms, spun half round, and dropped on the sand.

Maclear stood panting. He had been fighting harder than he would have thought possible; and the torches were still smoldering behind him between the ledge and the beach. He looked at the long sprawl of the young body in the moonlight. The upturned face was all Sombra's. Maclear was afraid; his heart contracted. He carried Sal past the torches, laid him on the beach, brought water and bathed his face. Presently his eyes opened, and he looked quietly at Maclear.

"I'm sorry I hurt you, lad," said Maclear, his anger all gone out of him, "but you made me."

He need not have justified himself. For

Sal's answer was a smile, so suddenly, vividly tender that Maclear was dumb. He dreamed of seeing Sombra smile at him some day with some such fond look—only different, different.

Sal said: "It's all right. I'm used to bein' hit. And you done that *fine!*"

After a moment Maclear helped him to his feet. He winced and whitened, but refused more help. He said it was only his shoulder, where he had hit on it when he fell. His one anxiety seemed to be that Maclear should not be troubled. His own face, with its strange, brooding look of absorption, was yet serene. "I won't be able to row the boat for a week, and Sombra'll have to take the next lot of toy boats to town. But it was worth it."

"Why did you make me do it, Sal?"

"I—wanted—to see—what I could do—against a grown man."

"Well, you know now."

"Yes; I know now."

"You young fool," said Maclear roughly, "I might have killed you!"

With his faint, secret smile, Sal pulled the stumps of the torches from the sand and cast them into the lake. They drew a thread of sparks through the air, hissed, and were extinguished.

Maclear remembered that he had not passed them.

In the calm darkening night, lit with large stars, they went back together to Morning House. Maclear walked with his arm about Salvator, and he had never felt the boy so distant. The meaning of it all had eluded him; once more he had grasped at sand. He had been passive throughout, as when he crouched on the beach in the storm, blown over by the wind and the sand. Those forces which are the passions of nature had not used and mastered him more completely than had this beaten boy.

He felt that he had been built like a stone into some wall of defense raised by an obscure and tremendous fear.

BACK among the sand-hills, by the winding channel of a lagoon, Sombra had a little garden.

Here, on the day after the herring-run, Sal found her.

She sat with her head bent, her hands clasping her knees, looking into the colorless thin water spreading at her feet, which mirrored her and her garden. Her hair was loose, almost colorless, too, in the great light, for each strand was iridescent as a spider's web. She was crowned with a wreath of pink convolvulus, already drooping in the heat. Sal could not see her face in the shadow of her hair, but he thought she had been crying. He stood watching her a moment, unheard. Then he said, "Sombra, why've you got your best waist on!"

She wore an ugly blouse of pink flannel trimmed with coarse crochet lace, and a crochet-lace collar fastened with a cheap brooch. She lifted her head slowly. The glory of her hair flowed and hid the thing. She looked at Sal gravely. At last she said, "Sal, am I beautiful?"

Her brother considered her; then he glanced at his own reflection in the lagoon—rough black head, rough clothes, one arm in a sling of blue dusters. He answered simply, "There ain't no doubt, Sombra, that we're ter'ble good-lookin'."

"How do you *know?*"

"I've been to town plenty of times with Mait. The girls there ain't one of them as good-lookin' as you."

She gloomed at him with her great eyes. After a moment, looking away, she asked, slowly, "Sal, would you think I was good-lookin' enough to make any one like me—just for that?"

"I—guess so, Sombra." Sal stood very still.

"How d'you *know?*"

He smiled his faint, obscure smile. "I don't know, of course—but last time I was waitin' for Mait by the wharves, a girl come up to me where I was standin' under the lamp. She was a pretty girl. I guess she was—a good girl. I've never seen her before. I'll never see her again. She come up and said, 'I've been follerin' you all the evenin' till I'd courage to ask you for somethin'.' 'What's that?' I said. 'This,' said she, and pulled my head down with her two hands, and I kissed her. Then she went away—I guess you could have all of that sort you wanted, Sombra."

"Ain't it all one sort?"

Sal waited, faintly smiling, looking into the clear water. At last he said, "Why do you want to know if you're pretty, Sombra?"

"Why? Because it's all I have."

She rose suddenly, facing him. Her usual strong serenity was quite broken in her. Her hands clung together and worked passionately. Then she swept her arms wide, and stood so, facing him. She said: "Look at me! Look at me! Look at my clo'es!" She tore at the pink flannel covering her heart. "Look at this! I used to think it was nice. Now I know it's poor and ugly and common—like us. Look at my hands!" She held them toward him. "They're spoiled with work, stained with potato-peelin's, scarred where the sand's got into a cut, or where the frost hurt them hangin' out washin' in the winter. Listen to me talk! I don't use the right words; I say them wrong; I don't have time to read or study— What I want to know's this: Am—I—beautiful enough so as all the rest—won't matter?"

"Since when have you got to be ashamed of yourself, Sombra, and of me?"

She said, after a little time, "You know."

"I guess I do."

"We've nothing, Sal; we are nothing but just ourselves."

"Just ourselves."

"And he—even in the clo'es he got in the town here when most of his things was washed away—even in them, he's—different."

"Is he?" The boy was still smiling faintly.

"It's nothin' he sees or does. He's kind—*kind!* It's something in me— Sal, a little while ago I'd have been ter'ble mad at him for hurtin' you last night."

"I told you it was my fault."

"Yes. But it wouldn't have made no difference then. Now"—her voice sank to a breath he could hardly hear—"it don't seem he could do anythin' wrong in my eyes."

Sal waited, something kindling behind his dark reserve. At last he moved. It was to thrust the girl away. He said, "Is it like that with you?"

She shrank a little. Sal had never turned his fierce look on her before. He faced her like an adversary. His words came like stones.

"You want to know if you're beautiful enough? You got to go with Mait to town to-morrow. Walk down Center Street in the evenin'. Any man's looks'll tell you what you wanter know."

"Sal——"

"Well? You wanter to be told how beautiful you are?" He caught her wrist savagely. "You're beautiful enough to make *him* sell his soul for you in a little while. If you'd like it that way, Sombra——"

There seemed a sort of fire between them as they stood there, so like, so passionate, mutely questioning each other. Then the red flamed in the girl's face. Her eyes darkened. She jerked herself free. Once or twice she tried to speak before the words came.

"I won't have it that way!"

She tore the wreath from her head, the lace collar from her neck, and threw them away together. Her hair she swept into a rope, twisted it, strained it back from her face and pinned it close. Her hands trembled. She paused. Sal said softly, "You're beautiful yet, Sombra."

"Then I'll be beautiful no more!"

There was a broken clam shell in the sand at their feet, sharp as a knife. She caught the shell in her hand and gashed her own face with it, a deep, grotesque scratch, broadening into crimson.

After a moment Sal gently took the shell away from her and threw it into the lagoon. She did not resist him. She was very still.

He said quietly, "Are you goin' to town like that?"

"I'm goin' to town like this. I'm goin' to let every one see me like this. What does that matter? I'm goin' to let *him* see me like this, without even the one thing I have!"

Sal, smiling faintly, stood out of her way. She moved past him royally, the blood spreading unstanched on her pale face.

She was beautiful then, with some fire and force of the spirit, as she had not been before.

When she was gone, Sal sat in the sand, motionless, his head on his knees. He stayed so a long time.

MACLEAR was watching a cloud. When first it had appeared above the heat haze on the horizon, he had thought it a sail.

It had not been visible when, a few hours earlier, he had helped Sombra launch the heavy old boat in which she was going with Mait to the town on the mainland. He had carried down a dozen little toy vessels for her, and helped her stow them away, with such other odds and ends as they were taking. She had hardly spoken to him.

For him, her eyes were veiled; he saw them heavy as if with weeping, and wondered at that, and at the scar. Her face was pale, weary and spiritless; in the gray glare, it seemed to have little beauty that any one should desire it. In this she had her will.

Maclear had added an errand of his own to those that normally occupied her when she went to town.

He had the fancy to take her sailing in the evenings, when the shore-larks twittered along the lagoons, and there would be dew on the canvas, and great stars waiting for them out on the open lake. He wanted to see her face under the stars. And on the single occasion when he had gone to the town himself, he ordered a skiff at the boat-building yard beside the flour-mills. This skiff would now be finished. And he had asked Sombra to bring it back with her; it would tow easily behind the larger boat.

In the afternoon, Maclear watched the cloud.

TOWARD evening, and the cloud usurping the whole heaven, he saw Salvator come from the dunes carrying a load of driftwood on his unhurt arm. He laid this on the lake beach and went back heavily, as it seemed, for more wood. Maclear went toward him.

As the cloud had drawn all light to itself, so now it seemed to have absorbed the air. When Maclear reached the pile of driftwood, he drew his breath quickly, and his clothing clung to his damp body.

Sal had just laid the fourth load on the heap, and now stood beside it. His face was raised to the cloud, and the reflected light made it luminous, still, unearthly. Then he lifted his right hand and struck, passionately and in silence at his bruised shoulder.

"What is it?" asked Maclear quickly.

"I shouldn't have let her go alone with Mait. But I thought the weather would keep fair."

"Is there a storm coming?"

Sal did not answer. He still struck, softly, ceaselessly, at his own injury, which had kept him on the island and sent Sombra to the town in his place. After a minute the action became intolerable to Maclear. He laid his own hand on the boy's, and stilled it; he said, "Is it the storm you are afraid of?"

"You know how Mait is in a storm."

"Yes." Maclear knew. A vision flashed before him—a vision of Sombra crouching in the stern of the boat, while the old man moved down upon her, with outstretched, groping hand and murder in his face, as he had moved down upon Maclear that night in the quiet kitchen.

"They will see the storm coming and wait," he said.

"Mait will not see it."

As though words were futile, Sal's voice trailed to silence. In the sand beside him, Maclear stood like a man half stunned. Fear had come so suddenly.

The great glowing cloud curled slowly, a crest running for miles, the ethereal foam of a wave.

Maclear said, "Why are you gathering wood?"

"It'll be dark when they get back. There's no light. Maybe they will need help to make a landin'."

"The storm may not break."

Maclear knew the deadly suddenness of the Lakes; but he could not believe that any danger could come from the cloud, now threading here and there into thin wisps which seemed the only real clouds, blowing from the height of a bright, uplifted hill.

Sal did not reply. He went slowly away to fetch more wood.

After a while Maclear stirred and sighed. He told himself there was nothing to fear—yet. He, too, dragged himself away to look for wood. There was nothing else to do. There was not another boat on the island.

He dragged at a bleached log, long buried in drift sand. He dug it free with his hands. The sand cut his fingers like glass; they were bleeding when he cleared the log and found it too sodden to burn. Looking at his bleeding fingers, he told himself again that he was afraid of a shadow.

They rested a little. The storm had not broken. Once or twice they were aware of distant thunder—more as a tremor of the atmosphere than as a sound. Sal said, "I am goin' to light the fire soon."

That was the first time either had spoken for an hour.

They waited a little longer. Then Sal lighted the pile.

And as if fire answered to fire, from the depth of the cloud a cloth of flame seemed suddenly lowered and caught back. In the darkness after the lightning, their fire lighted the dunes, the lake, the cloud itself. They saw they must bring more fuel.

They went to and fro under the cloud, working in a narrowing world that seemed all on fire.

They rested again, without the intolerable circle of heat. There was another flash of lightning. Maclear said, "Do you see anything of the boat yet?"

"No. But here's the first wind."

A white line, like a line of mist, was running shoreward under the cloud. Maclear saw this first gust. In the following silence he heard it break on Morning House like a wave.

Their fire, which had been beaten down and blown into flying rags of flame, sprang erect.

Another blaze of pallid lightning showed them the convolutions of the cloud rigid as iron above, trailing milky skirts of vapor. From this vapor another white line broke glimmering, and rushed toward them. Maclear was out on the ledge now with Sal. The second gust struck them together; foam broke suddenly to their waists. Sal clung to Maclear. His voice came like the crying of a gull.

"I think I saw the boat——"

Both waited for the next flash. In it they saw something small and dark far out on the lake, flying on the face of the rushing vapor like a bird. Sal said,

"That's the boat."

"What will it be best to do?"

"There's nothin' much we can do. They're racin' the storm. Me, I think the storm and the boat will about strike on the island together. They'll beach the boat. No time for anythin' else. When she strikes, run in and haul her up."

Maclear nodded, his eyes straining to find and hold that faint flying speck where Sombra was coming to him.

In that moment his doubts and his hesitations passed. This was his appointed time, his day of salvation.

The boat came nearer. Behind it everything was lost in a terrible misty smother, a dissolution of air and water, one with the other. They stood ready to seize the boat when she struck the beach. Maclear had never felt so calm, never so strong.

Nearer she staggered under a terrible press of sail, nearer. Mait was at the tiller. Maclear saw Sombra crouched forward. He smiled. As if he could see, Mait was holding the boat straight on the line of their fire; she fled toward them on a crimson path; steep waves began to overtake her; those two waiting on the beach were blown now, stung with spray, blinded with level rain. Maclear was no longer afraid. She was there.

"Now!" cried Salvator in his ear.

They leaped into the foam together.

THE boat came down upon them. For a moment she was flung upward, tossed to heaven; then she rushed toward them on a sliding hillock of foam, hung, hesitated, took the sand, reeled on again. She struck, heeling far over. They thought she would go to pieces under their eyes. The blind man had not shortened sail, and mast and sail seemed to melt away into the wind, for at that moment the weight of the storm struck also. There was no other sound to be heard. Maclear and Salvator ran in and seized the thwarts, heaving and straining against the grip of the sand.

They had her up in the thinner surf after a sharp fight. Thinking only of Sombra, Maclear leaped into the boat and stooped over that crouching shape in the bows.

Coats, canvas, tarpaulins—these things were in his hands and he cast them away. They fell to a horrible vacancy. There was no one there.

There was no one in the boat but Mait!

He searched like a madman. Sal was with him. Sal lifted a broken rope from the stern and showed him the end trailing in the water. Maclear could not hear what those white lips said to him for the drive of the rain and the spray. But he was instantly still, seeing the whole thing.

Sombra must have been in the skiff towing astern, that her weight might prevent the light boat overriding the heavy one. Mait could sail a boat by the feel of wind and tiller and the sound of waves. But why had he not taken her aboard? When had he lost her? When had the rope parted? Mait was slowly climbing the beach, and Maclear, numb and motionless himself, saw the boy run to the old man and heard those wild questions with his soul, not his bodily sense. He saw Sal clinging to Mait, crying to him with a dreadful beseeching. But Mait struck him out of the way and strode on, silent. Sal lay where he had fallen in the surf and the running shingle, beating at the stones with his hands.

So much Maclear saw. A horror was on him. He did not go to Salvator. He leaped from the water-logged boat and ran from that place, stumbling. Again his foothold in life was swept from him; he was blown like a grain of sand in the senseless ruin of events. Once more he was shelterless. He had lost her.

THE STORM was long past.

For hours Maclear had paced these beaches, looking for what any wave might leave there.

Light came suddenly at last, and long before the sun. As though veils had been rolled away, he stood on the low sandy promontory and gazed westward across the tumbling ridges of blue and white to where, beyond the shallows, something dark rolled in the trough of the wave.

In a minute he saw that it was a small boat, nearly awash.

Maclear began to tremble. He went down the slope of sand to the beach. From here he could not see the boat for a little while. Then it lifted on a higher wave. Water-logged, it drifted very slowly shoreward, lost repeatedly in the shadowy hollows, visible again against the running foam, toward the spot where they had built the fire.

Maclear waded toward it through the surf, which was still strong.

He swam out in the colorless twilight. An unearthly purity rested on everything. The last stars were withdrawn.

When he reached the boat, he was too weak even to raise himself and look into it, low as it lay in the water. He could only float with it to shore, shouldered in by the waves. Even when it had taken the sand, he could do no more for a while than rest beside it, holding to it with his hands.

Then he drew himself erect, and looked.

She lay as he had known she would lie, with her head on a seat, and her black hair floating in the water which more than half filled the pretty little varnished boat. Her face, pale as pearl, seemed purely asleep; across it the cut showed darkly. Her hands stirred in the water as the skiff shifted on its keel under Maclear's hands.

He stooped, took her in his arms. Her head fell slackly on his shoulder; the water rained from her hair, her clinging clothes. He carried her away from the boat and laid her gently on the beach. Spent as he was, somehow he did not feel that weight. He knelt beside her, with no thought, looking at her face.

He took his wet coat and rolled it clumsily into a pillow to keep her head from the sand. He straightened her limbs, her dress, gathered her cold wet hair neatly on each side of her face. He remembered how warm it had been that day he kissed it in the sun. He might have spoken then, when she was looking at him with her soft, surrendered eyes—when she was alive, and near. Now she was gone so far she would never hear, though he cried to her all day, "I love you, Sombra—I love you——"

He caught her in his arms, crushed her sweet, unresponsive face to his heart, told her again and again. Too late——

He rose at last, still holding her, staring out to the deep water, where light was coming to birth. He took a step toward the lake, carrying her. A dark pressure and obscurity were on his mind. He saw the world like a dream on the edge of reality, receding. With the foam about his feet, he went slowly toward the deep water, carrying her.

Then he stopped, aware for the first time of hands that clung to him, of a haggard face turned to his own, of beseeching words.

He said gently, "What is it, Sal?"

"I been tryin' to make you listen these five minutes— Oh, put her down, give her to me! She ain't drowned. It's the cold and the wet. She ain't dead."

Maclear listened, shook his head; the words seemed to have no meaning. He went a little deeper into the surf with his burden.

"Mr. Maclear—Alan, for God's sake, listen! You love her. So do I. Give her to me. I won't hurt her. I tell you she's alive. She's my dear sister. She's Sombra. She's livin' yet——"

"What do you say?"

"Alan, I tell you she's alive."

Maclear began to tremble again. Something was here, greater than he could endure—hope. He allowed Sal to take Sombra from him and lay her again on the beach. He stammered: "Take her. But give her back to me."

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

"By God, I will!"

"What are you going to do with her, Sal?"

"I'm goin' to warm her in the sand." He laid hold of the sleeves of Sombra's clinging blouse and rent them from shoulder to wrist. He said to Maclear: "Go and clear the embers away. You can't help me in this."

Maclear went unsteadily to the circle of blackened wood coals on the beach. The sand beneath was still hot.

Maclear stooped and dug desperately, making a long shallow depression in the sand, like the beginning of a grave.

He did not look when the boy passed him, carrying, sheltered in his coat, that shape no whiter than his own face. He did not turn when Sal laid Sombra in the trench and heaped the sand above her, till she was buried from throat to feet in the warm dust. He waited, seeing only the dawn. He did not know if the dawn brought death or life.

Sal came quietly to his side. The boy's face was wet with tears. He put his arm about Maclear's neck. He said gently, "Alan, come to her."

Maclear could not stir for a moment; he had traveled too far in that stillness. He saw a white bird wheel above the surf, and descend to it surely, and rest.

"Come and speak to her, Alan."

"Is she——"

"She's safe. She's alive!"

AFTER a moment Maclear turned, drew Sal toward him, and lightly brushed the black head with his lips. His own face was wet. He did not remember that he had wept. He said: "Sal, what I have to say to Sombra I can't say even before you, who have brought her back to me. Will you leave her alone with me a very little while?"

"Yes. I must go to the house and kindle the stove and bring a blanket or somethin'. I won't be long. I'll come back for you." But he lingered a minute, looking at Maclear wistfully.

"She's yours, Sal. Trust me to keep her for you—a little while."

"I guess she's not mine any more," said Sal softly.

He went away. Maclear turned and sank on his knees beside Sombra. He did not speak at first. He wanted nothing but to look at her face and be assured of the life there.

She looked at him also in that silence, with the searching, questioning expression of one who has been far from life for a little while, and finds some new quality in the things of life on her return. At last, seeing how he had suffered for her, she stirred a little under her heaped sandy coverings and stretched to him her hand.

He took it in his, raised it to his lips. She drew him weakly toward her.

"Kiss me, Alan."

There was no joy in her voice, but a solemn and meek acceptance. She seemed to say, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." As his lips touched hers, she whispered tremulously: "I'm glad—glad—that I'm to see you again. There, in the boat, I thought of you."

Maclear remembered how nearly that rich voice with its homely speech had been lost forever in silence. He said, "I love you, Sombra."

"I love you, Alan. I've loved you all the time. It seems there never was a time before I loved you. But it ain't right I should. I'm not fit for you."

"Sombra—your eyes are full of tears. Let me wipe them for you."

She smiled at him. He wiped her eyes, and she laughed a small, faint laugh at her own helplessness. She said: "Will you lift my head a little? The sand's heavy, though it's lovely and warm. It was so cold in the boat."

Not trusting himself to speak, he raised her head on his hand, let it lie there. The trembling of that hand communicated some shadowy trouble to her returning life. She whispered to him, "It's good—to have you near—but if I done right, I should send you away from me—never see you no more——"

He looked at her sternly. The passion of his need rose in him, hard, clear as a flame. The receding waves had left on the beach half of a clam shell, brimmed with water and large enough to hold all night the images of a few stars. Now the stars were gone. As he looked, he saw the water reddened and transfused into wine, the miracle of the full dawn made manifest in that narrow cup.

He lifted the blue oval to her lips and said, "Drink."

She sipped from it, her large grave eyes on his, wondering. When she had drunk, he too drank of that cold pure water. Words were in his mind— "Water of life, clear as crystal—" They two should drink of the water of life in one sacrament.

He said to her, faintly smiling: "It's a charm. Nothing can part us now."

The sky, the sand, the foam, the shell in his hand burned ineffably into thin gold. The sun had risen.

Sombra was silent. Behind them, in the poplar thickets, a shore-lark began his silvery roving song.

MACLEAR stood on the long wharf beyond the flour-mills which were the small town's reason for being. A steamer was coming in from one of the lake ports lower down; since he was idle, he waited to see her arrive. A small crowd of people were waiting too, perhaps with better reason. Many of these people forgot the nearing ship a moment in watching Maclear.

He had not heard that some one, among the many who passed him, had paused, hesitated, and stopped, and now stood behind him, waiting till he should turn.

He turned and looked into Moira's face.

Still as she, he waited for the shock of enforced recollection, of associated pain; since, to him, she must always come with a shadow of pain. But nothing troubled him.

Then Maclear knew that he was free of the past. He said quietly, "Why are you here?"

"I came here to find you, Alan. I have found you sooner than I hoped I should."

"Why did you want to find me?"

She looked at him curiously, aware, even in that first minute which to her was fuller of emotion than she could well suffer, of a resistance in him that was almost hostility. The eyes that met her own were quite unmoved. She said, with some difficulty, "I did not come to—hurt you, Alan."

"You couldn't do that, Moira."

The words, gentle in themselves, held a ring of strange hardness.

He still looked at her, master of himself, master of her. He asked again, "Why have you come?"

"I fancied you in great loneliness and trouble—as I was. I came to comfort you."

"You couldn't do that, Moira."

Again the gentle words with their half-cruel meaning. She said in a low voice: "No—I see that I could not. But having come, and having found you so quickly, I will say what I meant to say. Where can we go?"

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

Maclear said slowly and, as she knew, unwillingly: "Come a little way along the beach, then. No one is there to overhear."

He led her from the wharf and along the beach on the side away from the town to a stranded log beneath some acacia bushes that grew from the low cliff behind the beach. He said, "We can talk here."

She was tired. She sat down on the log, looking up at him. He stood before her. It was as if he were almost out of sight, of hearing, of her who spoke to him from grief. He waited for her to begin.

The impulse to leave him with all she had come to tell him untold was strong on her. What she had considered the spiritual command was stronger still. She said, "You don't know what I came to say to you?"

"Of course not."

"You don't—wish to hear?"

"I wish you to do anything that seems good to you. I thought there wasn't much left in the world to say between us. I never even expected to see you again. But if you have found anything that must be said, say it, Moira, and let me go."

Pride of sorrow alone helped her to reply: "I'll say it, then. I came to forgive you."

"That is—very fine of you, Moira. But——"

The inadequate words filled her with a sudden bitter amusement. That struggle of the soul, that awful strife with grief and hate, to be so rewarded! She repeated, "But?"

"Do you want the truth?"

"Always—from you."

"Then I will tell you the truth. It's surely the least thing I can do for you, when you have come so far for me. And remember that you've asked me for it—that I shouldn't have given it to you of myself."

"Well, Alan?"

In the deepening dusk her face, upturned to him, gleamed with the unearthly whiteness, the unearthly delicacy of a flower. He hesitated again, and seeing it, she flung out her hands to him in a gesture of scorn.

"Oh," she said, "don't try to find pleasant words! Don't try to spare me! Tell me the truth. You don't want to be reminded—even by forgiveness? You want to forget it all?"

"I want to forget. And I am forgetting."

He turned from her, took a few short paces on the stones, and came back. She waited motionless, her sad eyes staring at him through the twilight.

"There's more—back there, in the city, when I saw you— Her eyes caught and held his. Incredibly, it was hers that failed— "Back there, I was sick. I was not myself. Without lessening my sorrow for what's happened, Moira, I must say this: I don't hold myself as guilty as you hold me, and I don't see myself as greatly in need of forgiveness for what I could help no more than you could."

"The bridge——"

"Did I design it to fall?"

"And he——"

As if from a spiritual security greater than any to which she could attain, he answered calmly, "*He* knows, if he knows anything, and *you* know, that I'd have given my life for his any day."

She saw, for a moment, faint and indistinct. He went on, with a rising bitterness: "A terrible misfortune came to me. You, with your weight of forgiveness, would turn it into a crime. Good God, one would think I'd killed Gordon with my own hands! I did no more than a hundred others do with no bad results. And you'd make me pay for all! Moira, it was no crime. I refuse to take that degree of responsibility, to accept it from you. I did wrong; but I won't submit to punishment for something of which I'm as innocent in intention as you. It was one of the terrible tricks life sometimes plays on any one of us—on you, or me, or any one. Life—it would grind us to dust if we'd let it. Don't forgive me too much, Moira—don't forgive me for what, after all, I didn't do!"

She was silent, blankly bewildered, blankly wondering. Almost he had put her in the wrong, made her less than just, less than kind—she, who had broken what was left of her heart in order that she might pity and forgive. She could find no words in which to refute him. Words were nothing. And he was quite blind to what had laid the corner-stone of that tragedy.

He was still looking at her steadily. The pity which she had come to give him, though it killed her, he gave her. She smiled faintly, feeling very tired, too tired to resist, too tired to argue, too tired to explain. She said very slowly, "Then it comes to this: You—don't—want to be—forgiven."

He corrected her. "I don't *need* to be——"

She just breathed the words, "You can get on without it!"

He assented gravely. "I can get on without it, in the sense in which you offer it. I must go on. I must live my life. I must forget. I'm a man. Not as you—I can't keep myself turning like a wheel around a perpetual shaft of remorse, of grief. And I wouldn't if I could—for a dreadful disaster of which, in the higher moral light of motive, I'm not responsible."

HE WAS so assured that for an instant Moira had a reeling vision of changed values, of facts shifting and changing ground, of the real becoming shadow and the shadow becoming truth—like things seen in a flowing mist. She controlled herself, and the glass through which she had seen darkly cleared. After a moment, she asked indifferently, "When are you going home?"

"I don't know. Not yet. Not until I must. Raynham will send the schooner for me soon, or if anything happens to make it necessary. He's quite competent to carry on in small things, and there are no big ones on hand just now." He frowned a minute, thinking of the bridge, hoping that the inquiry would be soon now, and the air cleared and business good again—in time. It would take time, of course. "I shall stay away as long as I can. Will you be in the city when I go back?"

"No. I am going South for the winter. I only came to—to speak to you before I went."

He said quickly, "Don't think I'm ungrateful—for what you intended."

"For what you refuse?"

He had been looking away from her, looking down the beach toward the wharf. Now he turned on her with a fierce passionateness she had never known in him before. He said in a low voice: "By God, you good woman! Do you want to make me out a murderer in the face of the truth?"

She shut her eyes, almost terrified at the abyss which lay between them, shaken by the mere masculine force of his anger, and all the time with a sense of blurred vision, of choked breath, of warning voices thin and displaced, as by an invisible fog. She did not reply. By and by he continued quietly: "There is no need to attempt to talk of this any more. It is better left alone. Neither you nor I will overlook our grief. Neither you nor I can judge each other. Neither you nor I, it seems, can adjust ourself to the other's point of view. If I have hurt you in this, I'm sorry. I'd do pretty nearly anything in the world for you—but this. I won't, by accepting your tremendous forgiveness, brand myself a Cain before you."

She rose, unable to bear anything further, longing to be alone. Maclear asked, "Will you let me take you to your hotel?"

"No. No, thank you, Alan. I had rather go alone."

He saw she meant it. He said: "As you wish. I am waiting here for some one. Then I am going out to the island."

"To Port Tallis?"

"Yes."

Moira looked beyond him. She asked, "Is this the one you were waiting for?"

Maclear turned. Moira, watching him rather than the one who came to him along the beach, saw his fine, hard face suddenly soften to a great tenderness. The marks of life cleared; he looked as if he had never suffered in anything, never sinned in anything. And there was something besides this, infinitely moving and appealing. It is an uncommon expression for any man's face to wear. Seen on his, it was incredible. For it was the look of weakness dependent on strength.

Sombra approached them slowly. Her beauty took on some of the grandeur of the coming night. Her eyes rested on Moira a moment, then went to Maclear. And even in the twilight Moira could perceive the color leap to the browned cheeks, the breath to the noble bosom.

She said uncertainly, "Is this——"

"Yes," answered Maclear directly; "I was married to her last week. This is Sombra, my wife."

After a long minute, Moira went to the girl and took her hands. She said brokenly: "You're my sister, then. I hope you will be as happy as I was."

"Thank you, ma'am," answered Sombra; "you're very kind. I didn't know Alan had a sister."

"I was his brother's wife."

Sombra's great kind eyes rested on the fair worn face, on the black dress. Suddenly she leaned forward and touched Moira's cheek with her warm lips. "I'm sure that was a good wish," she said softly, "and I couldn't help but be happy with Alan, could I?"

But Moira could not reply. At the touch of those innocent, trustful lips, the tears had come. She pressed Sombra's hand and turned from them along the shadowy beach, weeping. Sombra said to Maclear, "Ain't you goin' along with her, Alan?"

He said gravely, "She had rather go alone."

"She'd—come to see you, Alan?"

"Yes. She'd come to see if I was well and happy."

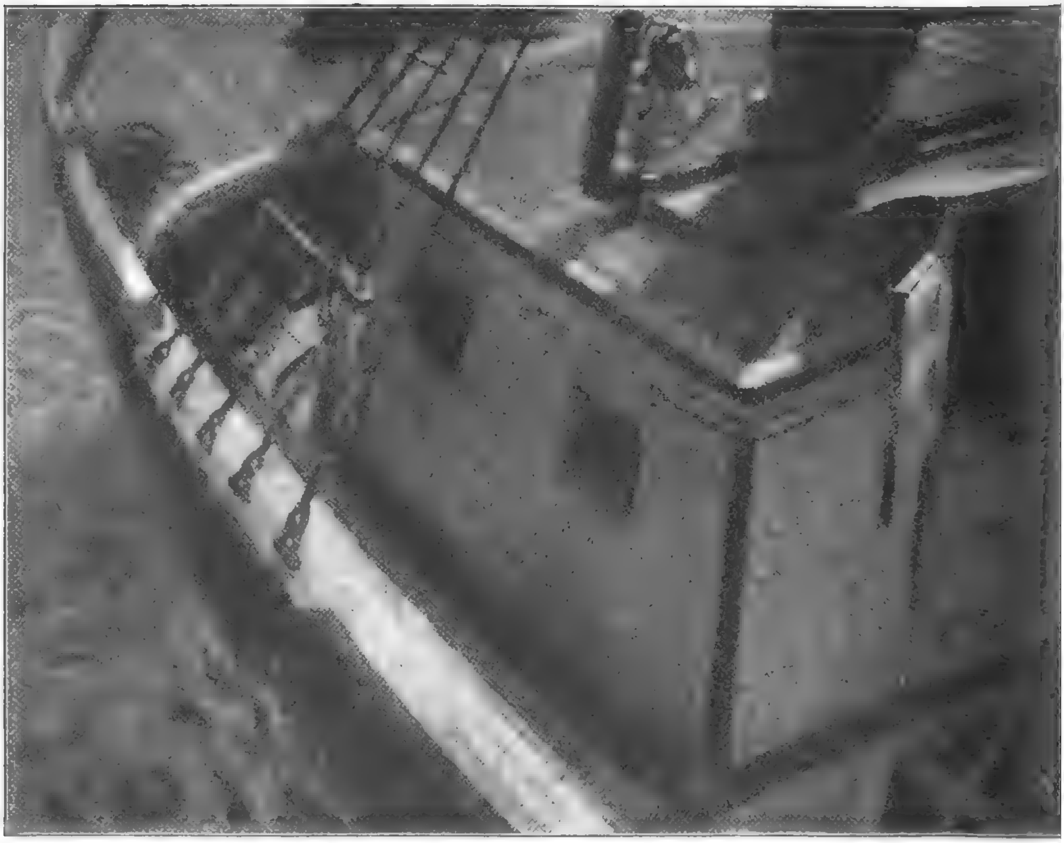
"That was sweet of her, poor lady! It—don't seem right to let her go that way. What did you tell her? Did you say you was—happy?"

Under the delicate acacia leaves, between the low cliff and the foam, Maclear caught her to him. His lips were crushed to hers. There was something hard and defiant in his love. He said presently, in an unsteady voice: "I told her I was happy as heaven. Happy, happy, *happy*— Come, Sombra; let us go home."

THAT night, Moira knelt a long time at the window of her hotel bedroom. She found a sort of peace in the silence, and in the great height of stars over the lake, whither the sail of Maclear's boat had faded and dwindled with the day. She could not follow him and his in thought to their island of happiness; her bruised heart shrank from that journey. But she was more at rest than she had been for a long time. She had done what she had come to do. If, as at that time often occurred to her, she was not to live very long, she had at least fulfilled the last possible obligation that life could lay on her.

At the hour she knelt there, Maclear, too, was on his knees, kissing Sombra's slender sun-browned feet.

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922



MACLEAR'S marriage to Sombra made very little change in the life at Morning House. She still cooked and worked for them all. If he made any reference to the time when she would not have to work, she was shy and troubled. Love, having opened to her the gates of wisdom, now taught her fear. She feared the future, though it was his.

They had to discuss this future, though each of them was strangely eager to live only in the present. And it was agreed between them, from the first, that when they left Tallis Island, Morning House should be closed.

Sal would go with them, sooner or later, to the city, and there Maclear would start him in life. He had a great tenderness for the boy, and would have done more than this; but Salvator would take no more from him than the opportunity of work.

There remained Mait Ransome.

Sombra remembered some old friends of her mother's who had a farm on the mainland about thirty miles from the town. In the old days, before Mait had become so crazy, she and Sal had stopped there in the summer. "Kind, nat'ral folk," she said they were, "and their cookin'-stove had three ovens." They were not too fortunate. She thought, for a consideration, they would give Mait a kind home if he would agree to go. "And he'll be better there," she said; "he won't hear the lake in the storms, and maybe he'll forget about father at last."

Alan arranged to meet the farmer in town and settled the matter then and there. There seemed some quality in Mackerrow, like the quality inherent in a cooking-stove with three ovens, that reassuringly balanced Mait's craziness.

When they told the old man, very gently, of this arrangement, he acquiesced in all they said.

They did not hear him, hours afterward, murmuring in his darkness; "Martha's leavin' me. She's goin' away with Juan Luz——"

This was the last, or all but the last, of Maclear's new cares. When this had been arranged, he gave himself up wholly to happiness.

"Before I was born commenced the thing that ended when Mait Ransome come to me, drippin' with the lake water, and the sound of it runnin' on the schooner's deck."

With the lovely renewal of his confidence in life that Sombra had brought him, and which was like a renewal of youth, he began to play with life and work as he had never played before.

ALL LIFE now came to him in this guise of renewal, this return of things perishing. He began to plan the rescue of little Port Tallis from the sand and talked of a house he thought of building there for Sombra.

She met his gay planning with silence. He asked her at last:

"Don't you want a house here, Mrs. Maclear? Then you sha'n't have one."

"It ain't—it isn't that. But since you come, I don't want this place changed. Not even changed in a nice way. I would like to keep it the same forever."

"I should like that, too, Sombra."

She looked at him a little wistfully. "Would you? It's different for you, dear. You're a man. You got your work to do. I know, soon, you'll have to go and do it."

He asked, with a smile,

"Could you do without me, honey?"

A gravity had come on them both. She was pale, and even at the shadow of a thought of separation, tears misted her eyes. But she answered: "Yes. Yes, Alan; I could, if that way it would be better and happier for you."

"Well—I couldn't get on without you!"

His voice was rough with emotion. He slid forward till he rested on the sand at her feet. She was sitting against the bole of a poplar. He thought she looked like some strong angel at the foot of a pillar; and he, and she, and the shaft of light, innumerable leaves above them were shadowed forth in the water below, like a picture caught in a blue jewel.

She said quietly, "Why?"

Staring at her, his face whitened. He said, "Can you ask me that?"

"Yes—yes; I do ask it. It has been in my mind to ask it, Alan, many a time. Why is it you need me so much?"

"I love you, Sombra."

"But I love you more'n you do me. Yes, yes, I do. I love you so that it seems to me sometimes that I've turned into you, that I see things with your eyes, touch them with your hands. And yet, if it was best for you, I could get on without you for a while, thinkin' of you all the time, waitin' for you, prayin' for you— But you couldn't get on without me a day."

"I—don't believe I could, Sombra."

"I know as you couldn't, Alan. Why?"

"I love you——"

"It ain't that."

He looked up again into her lovely face. With a faint smile, he asked, "Well, what is it, then?"

"I don't know. I would like to know. Dear, I know you love me true. But—it don't seem in man's nature to hold to me as you do—like you held to me when you come to me in the blowin' sand, and I set my arm round you, and you did not know even who I was, nor loved me at all— I would like to know what trouble it was so heavy on you when you come to me that night. I would like to know what troubles you now."

"Nothing troubles me now I have you."

There was reproach in her eyes. Maclear looked down at the sand again; he still felt the unspeakable tenderness of her gaze.

"Yes," she said at last; "there is something that troubles you. You can't hide it from me. Why won't you let me share it with you—this thing that makes you——"

"Well, child?" he asked curiously, hearing her hesitate for a word. "Something that makes me——"

"Weak."

So he had his word.

He stared at her, amazed. After a minute his face hardened. He said rapidly, "Sombra, you want to help me?"

"Dear, ain't I—aren't I—your wife?"

"You believe what I told you before—that my mistake—my fault, if you like—was small, out of all proportion to the way I've been made to suffer for it, and may still be made to suffer?"

"Of course."

"Then, if you want to help me, if you want to make me happy again, help me to forget. There's nothing else."

"Is that the best way, Alan?"

"It's the only way for strength, Sombra."

"Then I'll help you that way, dear love."

He knew she would never ask for his confidence again.

Later, he wondered why he had not given it to her, since she would have to know before long. Had it indeed been weakness, or a natural reluctance to cloud these, her unforgetable days with his own shadow?

He did not know. And they did not speak of it again.

It came to Maclear with amazement, how few were the gifts he had ever given Sombra—her wedding-ring, a cheap brooch she had fancied, a few other trifles. He was ashamed. Now he ordered beautiful things for her decoration. A slender chain of topaz set in gold, a scarf that should be a tissue of gold deepening into russet shadows, one of those sweeping, silky gowns women always seemed to find an odd time for wearing—Maclear guessed himself an artist, imagining her beauty. He was happy as a boy, lavishing on her all the tender fancies of his life.

The goods arrived in the town at last, and he brought them back to the island in the boat. He and Sal unpacked the boxes in the kitchen that evening. In the lamplight, Sombra and Sal fingered the things reverently, and with the same simple wonder. She lifted her eyes to Maclear at last.

"You're good to me, Alan. You're real good to me. But this is too much for what I am." She laid softly back upon the table the length of amber-yellow silk she had been holding. The stuff clung to her work-roughened fingers. The slightest cloud, as if of shame, dimmed her brightness. She sighed, "Too much for me——"

In answer, he brought the yellow-silk gown and laid it in her arms. The light was held in its narrow gold embroideries. It was bordered with thick, creamy lace, and beyond this again with fur. She breathed, "For me, too?"

"Yes. Go and put it on, and show me how lovely you can be."

She trembled a little and blushed under his eyes. She took it, meekly, as Esther might have taken the gifts of her king. She went from the room with it. Maclear showed Sal the chain of topazes and the earrings which he himself would hang in her sun-browned ears, wind about that noble throat. Sal fingered the pretty toys in silence. At last he said gently: "She ain't used to things like this. Be patient with her, Alan." But Maclear hardly heard him. For Sombra had come back and stood hesitating in the door.

He had known she was beautiful. But now, the power and royalty of her beauty held him motionless, and her brother, too. The folds of the gracious silk expressed her height; the delicate color caught and increased the golden light that seemed always to rest on her skin, as if it were an essence of the sun that they shared between them. Golden rose she was, and rose of his world. But her head that was carried so high above her poor garments was bent before him. She stood meekly, waiting for his approval.

He roused himself at last from his dream of her beauty, and went to her, the topaz chain in his hand. But in a moment he stopped, with a vexed exclamation, a little laugh. "Oh, my dear," he said, "I'm sorry! I forgot the shoes!"

Sombra looked down.

Through a rising mist she saw them—her ugly shoes, her working-shoes, patched and misshapen, scraped of blacking by the sand; under the furred and golden hem of the gown they looked ridiculous. Though Maclear had paused not a yard away, her feet seemed in an instant to be set on the edge of an abyss impossible to cross. And on the sensitiveness of her love, the perceptiveness of her pride—delicate beyond any imagining of his—that laugh struck like a blow.

He was laughing at her shabby shoes.

She turned with a sob, unexpected to her as to him. He saw a flash of golden draperies, the reproach of a face as pure as a wounded child's. Then she was gone, and the outer door had closed softly behind her.

THE wild child, thought Maclear, for all her wifehood! That door had hardly closed before he had it open, fond words on his lips, his hand outstretched to draw her in again.

But he opened the door on a blind world. His hand closed on nothing but mist.

While they talked, the mist had enfolded the house, flooding in from the lake, the lagoons, the hidden innumerable channels of the marsh. It was a sea four fathoms deep. Moon and stars stood free of it, and the taller poplars glittered above its surface. All else was lost and drowned. Into this mist Sombra had fled.

Maclear, too, went out, closing the door behind him. For what seemed to him a long while he sought her, calling, ever calling:

"Sombra, Sombra, where are you? Answer me!"

At last it seemed to him that the silver obscurity faintly replied:

"Sombra! Love, where are you?"

He waited, very still. He heard, drawn slowly through the intervening mists, his name.

"Oh, Alan dearest, I'm sorry, sorry, sorry——"

She had had no other words since she had run to him in the mist, and clung as she had never clung before.

"Sombra, I felt as if I'd lost you for good. I couldn't find you——"

"Oh, my poor boy; but I'm sorry!"

"Never run away again, beloved, so that I can't find you."

"Never, dear, never. Unless——"

"Well, my own girl?"

"It would do you good for me to run away."

"As if it ever could!"

They laughed softly, there in the white, dumb mist, never so dear, each to each.

"Forgive me, Alan."

"Me, too, Sombra. I didn't mean to be unkind when I laughed."

"You wasn't unkind. It was me bein' so silly. It only hurt because—because——"

"What, heart of gold?"

"Because I'm far beneath you, Alan."

He went on his knees, there in the mist, and kissed the clumsy, sandy shoes he had laughed at.

He said no more to her, nor she to him, as they found their way home together. But that night she woke where she lay beside him, hearing him again call her name.

As she listened, in the dark, she knew that once more in his sleep he lost her, sought her, longed for her with an infinite longing. His soul was bared to her. Awed, she crept to his arms, and those arms closed on her, though he did not wake. She heard the wild beating of his heart, and knew beyond doubt that, from whatever cause, it beat indeed only for her.

She was only a girl, given to love too young. She had doubted, wondering if she had given too much or if she could give enough. She doubted no more. The doors of her great heart of compassion opened wide for him. She could give, though she could not understand. And she knew now that he needed all she could give, and more than anything else in the world.

She began to be perfectly happy. She knew that his need of her would never fail. That knowledge was like a star, above any possible shadowing of the mists, either of death or life.

OUT on the lake, the *Martine Messier* lay becalmed.

Under the moon, in the mist, she had moved like a wraith. When the moon set, the mist took her, resolved her into itself.

Leaning over the side, Garroch could hear but the faintest ghostly voice of water. He could see nothing.

Now and then the noise of her old siren jarred through the voiceless quiet, but no other ship replied. It was as if she floated outside the world, outside life, to some nameless harbor of a shadowy sea.

Garroch hummed softly to himself. The rime beaded his gray eyelashes, made him cough. He lifted his hand unconsciously every now and then to brush it away. He wondered what was the sense in keeping a watch when a man could see nothing. And his ears were not as good as they had been.

Later, he went to the hatch and called. A sleepy murmur answered him.

"Come up here, Ian."

In a minute, his nephew joined him—a drowsy-eyed, white-haired boy from the Scotch townships. Garroch said,

"Stand here on the deck an' listen."

As though some solid intervening substance had been at that instant withdrawn, they heard the engines, saw a red light and a green one, like little balls of colored wool in the fog, bearing straight down on the schooner's starboard quarter. They jumped to the side and shouted wildly. They heard a shout in answer; the beat of the engines altered, slowed; a little the lights changed line. They waited. Garroch said aloud, "They can't clear us——"

The boy sobbed with suspense and excitement.

Then a shadowy gleaming bow struck the schooner, with a gentle, thrusting motion, just abaft the mizzen-chains. She heeled over to port. The steamer's bows, coming round, scraped slowly along her side, and the two vessels ground their length together, surged on with a strange effect of leisureliness, and as slowly separated. The tug—it was a fishing-tug—backed away, and immediately vanished into the mist.

They hesitated. The quietness was so great they could not believe their own danger. But as they paused, the deck under their feet seemed to give an uneasy shudder. The schooner dipped to starboard, swung slowly back, dipped again. A trickle of dark water slid over the deck from one side to the other.

They yelped and ran, shaken by the silence and the mist.

The boat had been towing astern. The collision had driven it round the port quarter. They dropped into it one by one, talking in low, scared whispers.

The sculls splashed flurriedly. They pulled away, chattering nervously, as near on the course taken by the tug as they could guess it. They shouted, but there was no reply. In a minute, looking back, no man could see the old schooner or say where she had been.

She kept afloat until day. Then, as if the winds and the lake were consciously gentle with her, the beautiful, old, forsaken thing, she went ashore softly, all sails standing, on the sands beyond the ledge of Tallis Island, where a fruit-boat from the Floridas had been wrecked twenty years before.

All about her the mist changed to pearl, to a silver and silent tide flowing past without ceasing. It did not lift with the day.

SOMBRA was walking homeward with Maclear along the marshes. He carried an armful of driftwood; she, of flowers and leaves—silvery yellow aspen leaves blotched with black, scarlet ground-willow, late goldenrod and purple asters. Leaves, blossoms and stems were covered by the mist with an infinity of smallest pearls.

Their hair, their eyebrows, even their eyelashes were whitened with the mist. Looking at Maclear, Sombra laughed.

"Now we know what we'll look like when we're old," she said. Then came the inevitable woman's question: "Will you love me as much when I'm old, Alan?"

After a moment, he said with passion: "Young or old, sick or well, living or dead, Sombra, you hold me. As you held me that first night of all, you'll hold me to the end."

"And you me."

She sighed with exquisite content, and slipped her arm through his. That clinging touch, her warm nearness, the rough sweet smell of her autumn flowers—these things were to remain with Maclear for many and many a day.

He said, with that appeal of which he was unconscious, "You'll never let me go, Sombra?"

"Never, dear love. And you'll never stop lovin' me?"

She could but just hear his answer:

"Never, even if you were—dust——"

They laughed a little, at themselves, at each other.

Never, never, never. Word too great for the knowledge of man's mind, but not for the courage of his heart!

Sombra said; "What's queer about love like ours is that it don't stay the same. It grows. When I used to think about it—before you come—I thought folk fell in love, and got married, and just stayed *so*. It ain't —isn't—that way. It's growin' all the while, from day to day. Alan, you remember when you laughed at my shoes and I ran away into the mist? Well, I wouldn't do that now. I'd know better than that you thought to hurt me."

"And when I was looking for you, I thought you were hiding on purpose—that you didn't want to be found. I'd know better than that, too."

Her sweet dark face, a little pale, turned to him in the mist. Her deep voice shook.

"Dear," she said, "wherever I'm called on to go—anywhere in life—anywhere in—death, I'll want you to find me."

"I'll follow and find you wherever it is, my wife." He kissed her as if she were a holy thing. They went on together.

Their way led them through a little poplar wood, a grove among the dunes. The straight and slender trunks glimmered about them in the mist. Golden leaves yet clung on the spires above them here and there, like metal flowers. In the hush of the mist, they could hear the beaded rime dropping on the sand.

Here and there, very gradually, the mist was thinning. It gave them glints of distance, immediately curtained by a fresh and soundless cloud, driving in from the lake.

Sombra's hand closed suddenly on Maclear's. She said, "Who's that walkin' in the wood with us?"

"I didn't see any one."

She pointed. "Away there. Just like a shadow, a great shadow driftin' through the trees."

He paused, looked, listened. The mist enclosed them. They walked on again.

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

He said, "I guess that was it—just a shadow of the mist, Sombra."

"No," she answered quietly; "it was a man."

"Was it?"

"Yes. I think it was Mait."

ALONG the beach, in the dizzy flow of the brightening mist, Sal came to them. When he saw them, he commenced running. He joined them, and stood a moment, breathing quickly, and looking from one to the other with eyes bright and wild with excitement.

"What's happened, Sal?"

It was Maclear who spoke. But the boy replied to Sombra. "It's a ship," he said briefly, "grounded out on the sands."

Something held them silent an instant. Then Sombra asked, in a low voice, "Grounded in the same place?"

"In the same place as the fruit-boat went to pieces? I guess so. But I ain't sure. It's so thick over the water yet that you can't see a thing. But when I was out along the ledge, seeing to my lines, I heard little sounds."

"Voices?"

"No. The wind's sendin' a ripple in under the mist. I heard it strike on somethin'. I heard other sounds—little creaks like riggin', little noises like a ship's sails make slattin' in the wind. Once I thought I saw a great tall shadow, as it might 'a' been the sails of a ship."

"She's run ashore all standin', then?"

"I think so. Last night, I guess, in the fog."

"I heard a siren," said Maclear quickly.

"Hers, maybe." Again, Salvator was looking gravely at Sombra. He went on: "Don't be worried, sis. I guess the crew got off all right in the boat."

Then Maclear looked at Sombra, and saw that she was pale and that her eyes were full of tears. He realized, perhaps fully for the first time, how the lonely and desolate lives of the brother and sister had been governed by that event of twenty years ago; that without it, they would not have existed; that through it their years had been shaped to a reflection of its own sorrow.

Meeting his eyes, she wiped her own on the back of her hand, like a child. "I'm silly," she said simply, "but I get ter'ble worked up when a ship goes ashore. Seems like as if it reminded *me*— What you goin' to do, Sal?"

"I'm goin' to swim out and look. I was just waitin' to tell you and Alan. I guessed you'd be along sometime soon." He had been carrying a string of fish. These he laid in a tuft of dune-grass. "You watch them fish, Sombra," he said gently, "and stay here. We'll know where to find you if there's anythin' you c'n do."

She nodded. Salvator led Maclear back a short distance through the mist, which seemed thrilled now with an invisible excitement, and out along the ledge which was the spine of the shoals. The mist was sunlit now, running faster and faster before a sweetening breeze that already sent small waves slapping gaily along the ledge; but it showed no break. It poured past them as though it would pour forever. Sal pointed into it.

"Listen," he whispered; "she's out there——"

Maclear listened. After a while he thought he heard faint numberless sounds that together made up the complaint as of a living substance. He heard no sound of men.

Suddenly he shivered. The mist and the silence oppressed him. He felt himself passive in the hold of long-dead events, ruled by their ghostly hands, impalpable and destructive as the mist. The whole world, invisible, seemed waiting about him; an enormous perceptiveness filled the air, the water; all existence was focused to one point of blind apprehension. He said impatiently, "Can you see anything yet?"

"No. But I know she's there." Sal swept his hand unconsciously across his eyes. "This mist," he went on, in the same hushed voice, "I wish it'd go. I don't like a mist. It makes everythin' seem all shut up, like. An empty room, shut up, out o' doors—" He shook himself out of his shabby old clothes. "Anyway, I'm goin' to see. If I was rich, I'd set a lighthouse here again, and a bell to ring."

"I'll come with you." Maclear stooped to unlace his boots.

"I wish you'd wait, Alan. I'll swim out, and if a ship's there, I'll yell to you, an' then you c'n go back and tell Sombra. She gets all worked up times like this— You c'n come out to me then."

"All right," said Maclear gently. He

was touched by the boy's thought for Sombra. He sat down cross-legged on the sand. "Get on with you, Sal," he said. "I want to know if there *is* a ship there."

Sal glanced down at him with his sudden transforming smile. The next moment he dived from the ledge. Maclear watched the sleeked black head come up, and the water bubbling green along the stones. In another moment Sal had vanished into the milky obscurity. The sound of his strokes came back a little time to Maclear. Then these also ceased. Maclear sat still, staring into the cloud.

He thought he waited a long time before he heard, strange and thin-drawn through the fog, Salvator's voice.

He jumped up and shouted in answer. Then listened. This time he was in no doubt.

"Alan! There's a schooner aground here on the outer shoal! All standin'! There's no one aboard!"

The ghostly voice broke with excitement, and ceased.

A thought leapt into Maclear's mind. He shouted back, "What's her name?"

The reply was indistinct, ending in two clear words: "Tell her." Maclear, considerably excited himself, turned back along the ledge to find Sombra. At that moment he heard her voice, wildly calling his name.

There was such terror in her cry that to him it was as if the mist had been rent apart and showed him darkness, not day. He ran down the ledge, calling to her.

"Sombra! Sombra, where are you? What is it?" He could see nothing. She was lost in the fog.

He ran desperately. The very wraiths of the mist seemed to clog his feet, as though he ran in a dream.

Again her voice came to him, sharpest dread in her accents. "Alan! It's Mait! I can't hold him! He's heard the ship out on the shoal! Alan, he's comin'! Don't let him by! He's comin' after Sal!"

Her voice approached, winged with dread. She was running toward him, toward the ledge. But Mait Ransome was upon him almost before her cry had ceased.

He strode suddenly out of the mist, which seemed to part for him. His broad blind face was raised. His dead eyes stared out lakeward. But at that moment he was not blind. Behind the fog he saw the ship—the ship of twenty years ago, the fruit-boat from the Floridas, long since fallen to dust on that shoal.

That vision was on his face, like a light that was darkness. Maclear caught his breath. No use to speak! He gathered all his strength, sprang forward, and caught the old man round the body.

He was strong. But as if he had been mist, Mait Ransome put him aside, swept him by. He said, "*I'm not goin' to have Juan brought ashore again*," and passed on toward the vision of his hate.

Maclear staggered and rolled splashing from the ledge into the shallow water. He was up again almost directly. But in that moment the old man had plunged from the ledge as Salvator had done, and like him was swimming slowly away into the fog, guided by those faint sounds that had led Salvator—the complaint of a dying ship.

Maclear hesitated a moment. But, after all, Mait was blind, and the boy was quick and could swim like a fish. He gave one great shout of warning, then turned and ran to meet Sombra.

ALL had happened so quickly that she had not yet reached him. She had been struggling with Mait. He had not hurt her. As he had put Maclear aside, so, in the strength of his vision, he had put her. She had fallen in the sand. Maclear saw her white face and her streaming black hair dawn suddenly out of the mist.

It was a face he did not know, a face staring beyond him in horror. His heart leaped in his throat. He ran to her, caught her in his arms, spoke to her—he did not know what. For a moment he had forgotten everything but her. And as she had fought with Mait to hold him, now she fought terribly with Maclear to get past him. As she had cried then, cried his name, so she cried now. But her cry was: "Sal! Sal! My brother!"

That cry rent his heart. Her desperate struggles to get away from him, to follow and defend Salvator, shook him to the soul. He tried to control her, to reassure her, but she was beyond his voice. She struck at him, crying all the time for "Sal, Sal, Sal—" He imprisoned her hands and carried her back to the beach by sheer force. Had he not used it, she would have thrown herself into the water and followed them to the ship.

He set her down on the sand. Her terror had passed to him, though he could not have said what he feared. He dared not leave her. She struggled no more. She seemed unconscious that he was holding her. She leaned against him. Her hands were held out, grasping the mist. Now and then she shuddered and moaned.

He never knew how long they waited on the beach behind the shoal, staring into that cloud.

Suddenly, from the unseen ship, there came a great cry.

Maclear was unconscious that he cried in answer. He felt Sombra shudder and grow stiff against him, as though at that cry she had died. There had been death in that cry. But life was in her, in the ceaseless endeavor of her hands, in the dreadful gaze that seemed to pierce the mist.

And they waited, awfully intent. There came no other sound.

Then Maclear would have covered those eyes with his hand. But she struck it down.

For the mist cleared.

It was running in great banks, as it does on the Lakes, each bank as sharply divided from the clear, and with as clean a line, as though it were a wall of stone. One of these walls passed over the island. In the clear behind it, there sprang suddenly to their eyes the glittering ship.

Maclear knew her instantly.

THE old *Martine Messier* had grounded so gently that she lay on an almost level keel. Her deck, just clearing the ripple, was tilted toward them. Her old canvas swelled unavailingly in the sweet, fresh breeze. From deck to topsails she was frosted with the rime, and the brief sun dazzled on her as if she were a diamond; she looked a jewel upon the face of another white wall of mist that came sweeping down on her, on the bright shoal-water where she lay so quietly, on the island and those who watched.

It came. The ship vanished, and the water and the strong sun. But not before they had seen. The deck was empty!

"Sombra! My God! I couldn't stop him! He threw me down like a child——"

Even then, though her terrible look was still toward the ship, she tried to find comfort for him. "I know," her dead voice said; "I know. It was not your fault, dear. It—was to be——"

Suddenly she failed and sank. Maclear laid her down in the sand. Her eyes still stared toward the ship. But he could no longer endure inaction. He left her, and ran toward the ledge.

In a moment he stopped.

Some one was swimming heavily to the shore.

Life seemed to stand still for Maclear while he waited.

A sleeked black head appeared from the mist. Sal's face stared blankly up at him from the fog. Maclear could not move.

Very weakly the boy drew himself up out of the water. Very slowly he walked to where Maclear stood. His eyes stared and stared, beyond Maclear, beyond the world. At last he said faintly: "I been divin'—after him. I couldn't find him—I'm cold——"

Maclear was cold, too. He gripped Sal by his wet shoulders, and strove, by impassioned words, with entreaties, even with tears, to break that terrible blank stare. He could not.

"He come on me when I was leanin' over the side— He took me to drown me— I threw him—with that fall you learned me—He cried when he went over—I can't find him. It's—done, done, done!"

Still whispering that it was done, done done, he moved slowly away from Maclear toward the beach.

Shaking himself free of the horror that rested on him as the mist rested on his vision, Maclear stripped and swam out to the schooner.

She dawned upon him like a shadow from the delicate blinding mist. He walked again her glimmering deck. He searched and shouted like a madman. Then, as Sal had done, he dived. Came up empty-handed, dived, and dived again. At last he was exhausted. He rested on the deck a while, shaking. Then swam back to the ledge, dressed, and followed Sal to the beach.

Salvator had not gone far.

He had fallen on his face at Sombra's feet. And now she sat crouched above him, swaying to and fro. She had drawn the boy's passive head on her knees, encircled his bare wet shoulders with her strong arms, crooning to him, passionately pitying him, with low mother-sounds of immeasurable grief. As Maclear approached, she lifted her head suddenly and wailed aloud.

He said, "Sombra, my dear love!"

After a long time, and as it seemed from a long distance, her eyes were looking at him.

She said: "Don't stay here, Alan. Leave us be. It's done."

"Sombra, my dearest, listen! It was an accident—it was in self-defense—O my God, *listen!*"

For suddenly an infinite terror struck to Maclear's soul.

She was distant—removed—fading from him, as though he saw her through miles of mist. She lifted Sal's brown hand. As if she had not heard him at all, she repeated, in the same dead voice, "It's *done.* He's done it—with his hand—at last."

"Sombra!"

He caught her in his arms. And at that as if he had struck her, she shrieked. She beat him away.

"My love—my wife——"

"Never again, Alan; never again. We're not fit. Not fit for you to as much as touch us any more!"

His hands reached out to her. She shrank from them as though her body would have burned him had he touched it. She said in that dull, strange voice, "We was beneath you before, not fit for you."

"Sombra, Sombra, you'll break my heart!"

"What are we *now?* O Christ of pity, what are we now?"

He tried to find her, to hold her. She and Sal had risen; and somehow they escaped him. The mist flowed between, and that space seemed to widen and increase till it was a gulf without bound, wider, deeper than the channel of the Bersimis, an unplumbed hollow that no assurance, no love, no reason could span, unbridgable as death.

"Sombra!"

But she was gone.

He had lost them. Clinging together like stricken children, they were running from him into the mist.

Only her wild voice came back to him, "Never—never no more!"

The night passed over Tallis Island—the mist and the keen air and the tide of stars. When the stars were going out, and a great wash of yellow light filled the sky, Sombra leaned over her brother and woke him.

He looked up at her quietly. As if the thought that had been all the time in her mind had been also in his, he said, "Sombra, you goin' away?"

"Yes."

Her eyes rested on him without reproach. His face twitched. He got up. He had lain down fully dressed, as if in expectation of her summons. She held out her hand. He took it. Clinging one to the other, like striken children, they went through the empty house.

They went out into the mist. There had been a frost, too, and the whole front of Morning House, the pale-brown reeds of the lagoons, the grass, the sand itself were all immaculately silvered. Their footprints were black in this purity; the first sun, the increasing warmth of the day would make them as if they had never been.

They went to the little boat-house. But Sombra, who had been quiet as a stone, shrank and wailed suddenly: "Not the little boat! Not his—" And so the dumb boy left the skiff where it was, and launched the heavy boat that had been Mait's. They stepped into it. Salvator took the oars. They crept away into the mist.

The oars made but a muffled sound in the stillness and the dim golden cloud. It was like the throbbing of a heart. The sound struck on a heart. And in a moment the snowbirds whirled affrighted from the lake beaches, and a score of wild duck lifted from the reeds. The mist itself seemed to part before that wild cry: "I love you, Alan; I love you!"

The oars beat steadily. The boy bent over them groaned once. The mist had not parted toward Morning House but toward the town. It was like a lane of rolling yellow vapor, a reeling tunnel, down which the old boat crept and crept, and in which it presently vanished away.

Later, when Maclear woke, he knew himself alone.

IT WAS late when Maclear rode out to the farm.

His horse was tired. He went at a walking-pace along a sandy track where thin ice crackled in every rut. A half-moon, risen high, barred the track with regular blocks of silver between the black shadows of pines that grew on each side.

Maclear looked at every tree and bush that he passed. For along this track Sombra had walked a little while before, and he was glad his eyes should rest where hers had rested.

He rode his horse to a weather-whitened door. He heard the dead dry stems of a vine rustle on the lattice. Before he could knock, the door opened, and a woman stood there. He dismounted.

"It's I—Maclear; it's good of you to have waited up for me, Mrs. Mackerrow."

"I knew it'd be you, sir. I knew you'd be right back. I kep' some supper for you. Come right in."

He entered with her. She called, and presently a half-clad freckled boy came stumbling down the stairs, stared a moment sleepily at Maclear, and then led his horse round to the stable. The door shut. The woman led him along a warm, stuffy hall into a dim, warm kitchen. There was coffee heated on the stove, cold meat, mince pie left over from Thanksgiving, bread, butter, cheese; Maclear was very hungry. He sat down and ate thankfully. The lean woman waited on him in silence.

She was bent and thin; she had the look of a human body worn to the hardest fiber by hard work; but there was a young and living spirit in her eyes. When he had eaten, she laid her work-distorted hand a minute on his sleeve. She asked in her weary, nasal voice, "You seen the poor thing, Mr. Maclear?"

"Yes. Thanks to you."

"My message come to you in time? I'm real glad. I when I knew, heard from Bassett at the Corners, it must be them."

"Yes. And I saw her. I saw Sombra—sleeping, in the hay wagon in Ohlsen's barn." His voice sank. After a minute he said with difficulty, "My poor girl——"

Mrs. Mackerrow smiled at him faintly. "It ain't hardship that hurts folks. I've had plenty I know. Sombra's strong as a boy. She won't come to no harm, sleepin' in a barn. And Ohlsen's all right. He's rough, but he ain't mean. They might stay and work for him a while. There's lots to do around his place."

"Do you think they will?"

The bright and eager eyes in the faded face met his look directly. "No," she answered at once; "I don't. I don't think she can stay set in any one place yet. She's like a wild cre'ture that's been shot at. She's runnin' yet. When the hurt stops a mite, she'll stop. And then she'll come to me."

"You'll help her when she does?"

"I will."

NEXT day, he learned that Sombra had left Ohlsen's farm with Sal. He followed her. This was the work to which in all patience he had set his hand—to follow her at the distance she had imposed, to guard her as far as possible, to be near her when she should need him, and to deny himself, until that time came, even a word with her.

It was a work that taxed all his powers. He might have employed help and traced easily those strange wild wanderings into which she had been driven by her love for him and her young recoil from tragedy. He would not. He would rouse no curiosity, speculation or suspicion of her and Sal. So he followed at a far distance. And Sombra never knew that love walked with her on her *Via Dolorosa*, unseen.

Once Sombra was sitting in the dried leaves outside a little wooden hut which she and Salvator had come upon that morning a short distance from the road.

Salvator had gone to buy some milk at a farm. She was alone.

When she raised her head she saw Maclear walking down the old corduroy road toward her, leading a brown horse.

For a moment she thought she saw a vision. Then she knew he was there in reality.

She had only to speak, to call, and the gulf would be spanned. Her spirit seemed ready to break free; her whole being strained toward him like smoke in the wind——

She caught up her basket and fled noiselessly into the hut behind her, cowering there among the blown leaves of the maple. She dared not move for fear they should rustle; she hardly dared breathe for fear he should hear. Maclear, leading his horse past the hut, heard the little rustle of her fall and took it for a squirrel. He went on.

When he was gone, Sombra crept from the hut and looked about her. The vacant woods rode upon her eyes, a horror of emptiness—like night.

Cries broke from her now that there was no one to hear. She began to run after him, breaking through the bushes, stumbling over thimbleberry and vine, sobbing and wringing her hands foolishly. But those few minutes in the hut had left her weak as no bodily effort could weaken her. In a moment she was too tired to walk or to cry. Salvator, returning from the farm, found her lying a little way in the woods, her hands covering a hoof-print that Maclear's horse had left.

She was quite conscious. When her brother raised her to her feet, she could walk, leaning on him. Her one prayer, so wildly made that he was terrified, was that she should be taken away from that place.

They went away at once, not by the road to the town but through the woods in another direction. They had not walked a half-mile when Sombra fell once more.

It was neither a faint nor an illness—simply a sudden failure of strength. Sense, life, motion seemed in a moment to be taken from her. Salvator carried her back to the little hut and laid her on the dry leaves.

He built a fire, heated milk, tried to feed her with it. She turned her head from him with a little weary murmur. He called her, held her in his arms, chafed her hands. She was beyond the reach of his voice or his hands; that weary, patient murmur of denial was all his answer.

She woke on the third day and raised herself among the leaves. It was to her as if she had just lain down there. But she was weak. And there were many things strange to her in the hut. She touched the rug that wrapped her, wondering. She saw a box of eggs beside her, and other things of which she had no memory. She called. In a moment Salvator was there, looking at her quietly.

"You better, Sombra?"

"Have I been ill?"

"A little, I guess. You've been asleep 'most four days, Sombra."

"I remember now. My head was queer. But it's all right now." Again she touched the rug and looked about her, wondering. She said, "You got these things for me, Sal?"

"No."

"Who, then?"

He was silent. In a moment she was on her feet, standing before him.

"Has *he* been here?"

"Yes, Sombra."

"What—what——"

"He come back this way when you was asleep. He called you. I couldn't make you hear. It was like as if you'd gone a long ways off."

"I came back—for him?"

"Yes, Sombra."

After a long silence she breathed, "Tell me some more."

"Oh, Sombra, there ain't no more to tell. He come here and held you in his arms and made you eat and drink. When you was better, he kissed you once and went away."

By and by she said in that low, stricken voice, "I thought it was a dream."

"No, Sombra."

"I thought I was rememberin' a dream when I remembered askin' him to do somethin' for me—somethin' cruel, somethin' hard to do. And it was to go away from me——"

She questioned the boy's face pitifully. She whispered, "And he loves me yet, Sal?"

"Yes, Sombra."

She dropped upon the leaves.

"Oh, surely, surely," she said, "there'll come a time when he must forget me?"

One would have thought it the prayer of her heart.

Soon she looked up quietly and asked for food. When her brother brought it to her, she ate and drank with a curious resolution. Meeting the wonder in his eyes, she said, "I must get strong quick's I can." He read her purpose. She was eating the food Maclear had brought for her that she might be strong to escape him again.

ON THE second day after that, she was well enough to go on, and they left the place.

Day after day they went on through the wooded country. Sometimes they were given shelter at a farm; twice they were allowed to pass the night in the waiting-room of a lonely railway station; they had even slept out of doors in that life-giving, glittering air, on fresh-cut hemlock branches as sweet as their sleep was.

The world through which they wandered was of unimaginable purity and beauty. A little light snow fell every night, and the days were clear. There had been no hard frosts. The earth yet had life in it; the streams ran between fringes of delicate ice and ferns yet green under the snow. It was tender and harmless as flowers, this snow. It hid the death of the woods under a covering as mild as the green leaves and blades of spring.

They came to another town and rested there three days. They had seen nothing of Maclear.

AT THE end of that time, when they left the town and again entered the woods, they felt a subtle change. It would have been hard to say how this change was apparent, but that which had been with them was now against them.

The town lay in a sheltered hollow. The land to the north of it rose in a great crest thinly grown with pines. Their road led them through these pines. And as they climbed in the glittering golden morning, they heard all about them the sound of a mighty tide in the tops of the trees, a sound solemn and inhuman, the voice of the great north wind.

They gained the height. From the country beyond the wind poured to meet them with leveled spears. It was the first wind of winter. It was like a wall built across their way.

By the road grew thickets of seeded goldenrod, slanted and whistling in the wind. Sombra saw a small golden thing lying under the bare brown stems. She stooped and took it in her hand.

It was a little goldfinch, a thistle-bird—one of those flocks which she had heard passing over Tallis Island in the night, their faint voices piping to one another under the great void of stars. Perhaps this was the very last of these weak, heroic travelers. And it had fallen by the way.

Still holding it in her hand, she said to Sal, "We must go back now." They went down the hill together. Above them, the north wind roared in the pines. Sombra carried the golden thistle-bird, dead of the cold. The solemn and mournful tolling of an engine-bell came up to them from the valley, and to that sound and the sound of the wind they descended.

Guided through the cry of the wind by the clanging of the bell on the yard-engine, they went to the little station. Here they waited two hours, with the snow increasing all the time, then found a train which would take them to within a few miles of the Mackerrows' farm.

When they were in the train, when they left it, the snow was falling—at first in a whirl of large, beautiful flakes, which grew smaller and drove like dust on the wind, until that wind itself seemed to have turned to snow.

They left this last station toward three o'clock in the afternoon and turned along the road which would lead them to the farm. They were very tired. A timidity was on them at the thought of claiming shelter from Mrs. Mackerrow.

They rested once under some tamaracks in a little ravine. At the bottom of the ravine a single black thread of water defied the enclosing frost. She thought of the stream beside the hut where Maclear had cared for her and left her, and of the cross on the silver maple, drilled full of holes by the downy woodpecker. She said, "Dear love, it would be better if I died and set you free that way."

"What'd you say, Sombra?"

"Nothin', Sal. We'd best be gettin' along."

She did not know that while they were resting under the tamaracks, Maclear was riding out to the farm to learn if they had arrived there yet, or if any word of them had come to Mrs. Mackerrow. For the last mile along the concession road he was forced to walk and lead his horse; the beast refused otherwise to face the wind and the snow.

Mrs. Mackerrow herself opened the door to him. For a minute she hesitated; horse and man were but white shapes moving in the current of whiteness. Maclear was white to the eyelids, on which clung tiny icicles. Then she knew him. She welcomed him with a little relieved cry.

"I'm real glad you've come, Mr. Maclear," she said. "No; I've had no news of Sombra. But Mackerrow and the hired man are gone to the Corners about a sleigh the blacksmith's mendin,' and the blizzard 'll keep them there, I guess. I'm ter'ble nervous for fear they've started back in the storm."

Maclear put his own anxiety, grown almost unbearable, aside. He said, "Wait till I take the horse round, and I'll come in and tell you it isn't as bad as it looks."

Her vivid eyes gleamed on him understandingly. She only said: "You're real welcome. When you've took Joe round, come right in and I'll get the snow off of you. I didn't hardly know you at first."

But some one else had seen him, and known.

When he knocked at the door, Sombra and Salvator were standing outside the fence under the shelter of the cedar hedge.

Their faces, like the dark faces of forest-things, mournful and wildly gentle, were turned wistfully toward the house. They had the courage to face the storm along the road. They had not the courage to face a friend.

While they were hesitating, Salvator said, "There's a man comin'."

Sombra looked. She saw a man leading a horse advancing through the white drive, so that he must pass them.

"We'll speak to him, Sombra. Maybe he'll tell us who's at home. Maybe he'll tell us——"

Her hand across his mouth stopped him, held him silent in astonishment. The man and the horse went past them, plodding heavily through the drifts, already three feet deep and carding into a smoke of snow as the dunes carded into sand. He was only a white shape in whiteness; they also were so white he never saw them. A moment, and the level snow hid him. Sombra's hand fell. Salvator turned to her.

"Sombra, why——"

She was looking past him into the snow. Her face was like the face of the dead, suddenly resigned, utterly given over to peace. But a strange pride and rapture touched it, as if, dying, she had seen heaven ere she died.

"Sombra!"

"That was Alan."

"That man who went by? Why, you couldn't see him for the snow! You can't be sure."

She smiled.

"As if I wouldn't know——"

"What are we to do?" said the boy through his teeth.

"He's followed me—to take care of me, my dear love!"

"I wish to God he hadn't!"

She answered, with that curious peace and gentleness, as if all suffering were over, all griefs already at rest, "He loves me so that he can never let me go."

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

"Sombra, what's come to you? You look—happy——"

"Ain't that a fine thing for any woman to know?"

Her weariness, her humbleness were gone. In a moment her beauty had come back. There was something unearthly in her—a fire of the spirit before which the fires of the flesh were as ashes. As Salvator looked at her, all that had been dead in him, all that had been quiescent leaped to life under the breath of fear.

She said again, and no tenderer whisper had ever passed her lips in her days of love on Tallis Island: "He spoke true. He'll never let me go. He'll never set himself free of me!"

He caught at her, but too late; his foot slipped; he fell, and the snow blinded him like burning dust; he felt her cold garments drawn from his hold; he heard her voice.

"I'm goin' to set him free——"

He rose; he hesitated one instant, questioning if he had time to call for help. He had not.

Already she was lost to sight, taken from him by millions of small flakes, by innumerable falling crystals. Ever her near footprints were blurring under his eyes, melting into invisibility. Shielding his face with his arm, he ran after her.

A WILD strength was given her at that hour. She fled through the drifts as if wings had been added to her. Very quickly her brother was left behind. For the first time she had forgotten him.

She ran into the woods. She had no memory of direction, no purpose except that she was running away from the farm.

In a moment, as it seemed, dark hemlocks enclosed her. As she ran, they appeared to rise from the ground behind her, shadows of night. They grew so close together that the wind hardly swayed their sweeping branches of everlasting green. She saw, as she brushed through them, that the little dark leaves were massed with snow; that snow lodged like dust, even in the interstices of the numberless cones. The substance of the trees seemed to be turning into snow.

In all the woods nothing moved but the wind. It companied her with its strong, inhuman cry in the high crests that the snow hid from her sight.

To Salvator, following her, with his whole life bound down, concentrated, intensely applied to this one action, she seemed to have melted away and vanished in snow.

Her track still led him through hemlocks. Under their immense drooping fans of green, these great evergreens had drawn and concealed all the winged things remaining in the woods as completely as the seeds were hidden in the earth. The slope of the ground descended, and in time the hemlocks were mingled with cedar and tamarack, and these again with alder and wich-hazel. Soon her footprints led him to a stream, now a narrow darkness under roofs of rippled snow and air-blown ice. It was the same stream by which they had rested earlier in the day; it was the same stream that ran by the hut, miles distant. Perhaps she had thought of this. For on the farther bank her track swerved. She was following the stream.

Salvator knew by the appearance of her footprints that he was gaining on her.

Sombra had left the darkness of the hemlocks. All about her now was a growth of young birch, almost invisible in the snow. In places the little trees were close-set as grass. They complained all together with a small, dry sound. They hindered her. The weight of the snow on her feet was like the weight of water. But she did not feel it, or the cold, or any longer her anguish of heart.

Rest was opening to her. She felt light, happy, free and at peace. The great cold was laying its hand upon her, and in her dream she was healed.

The snow changed to a white shining, as if she walked enclosed in the petals of a flower. She thought Maclear walked beside her, and in her dream there was no shadow between them, no separation. She carried something in her hands.

At first this had been a very small thing, only the body of a little thistle-bird, light and stiff within its soft plumage. But as she carried it, it grew heavy. It changed. Looking down, she could see a head that rested against her heart and small hands that clung to her own. She wondered why she had thought it a bird; it taxed her strength to hold. It made her tired. Beside her she heard her husband's voice. He was saying, "Rest, my dear heart, my poor girl."

She said, "Yes, love; we'll rest together."

They moved in a clear shining beyond all storms and the snow enfolded her as with veils. She tried to fold herself and the child closer in these veils, for within them she was safe and warm.

She stretched out her hands to take hold on the delicate and pitiless substance of the snow. She felt them caught and clasped in other hands.

AFTER a while she was aware of a voice, a face, and of pain.

Her brother's face, his hands gripping her own, his voice !

There was a rent in her veil of quiet. Looking, she saw life encroaching, thrusting through. She tried to escape, to run from it, to reach once more that calm beyond the storm and within it. But he held her, though she fought for death as eagerly as another would have fought for life.

Presently she said in a dying voice, "Why have you come?"

His eyes shone upon her with a strange calm look. He was rapt and exalted in this conflict as another would have been in a vision. He answered solemnly, "To save you an' me."

"Let me die! Oh, leave me be an' go! Brother, if I was ever dear to you or done anythin' for you, let me go free!"

His burning look did not change, or his calm. He caught snow in the palm of his hand; the frost had touched her cheek; it was bloodless, wax-white as the face of the dead. He laid hold of her again. When she struggled and fought in her dread, he took her head between his knees and held her so, sobbing and crying, while he roughly rubbed her cheek with snow. When he saw the blood returning to the frozen flesh, and knew she suffered, by the greater concentration of her eyes, he lifted her to her feet.

"Sombra," he said, "look at me."

She looked at him with her lost and tragic gaze. That flower of rest was strewn on the wind and snow. And life was pain, and love was pain. She said hoarsely:

"I'll never forgive you, never, never! You've stopped me from settin' him free."

Plaintive and trivial words she must use to clothe her passionate renunciations, her despairs and denials, as each weak body of this dust clothes the flame of which none can say whence it cometh or whither it goeth.

"Sombra, you're more to me than any one

in the world. But now your forgiveness or unforgiveness don't matter to me no more than a flake of snow."

She was held and stilled by his solemn voice as his hands could not hold or still her. He lifted his hands before her, held his open palms in front of her eyes.

The storm seemed suddenly small, faint, of little account in the balance with that gesture.

"Sombra, what do you see on them hands o' mine?"

"I only see the snow."

"No," he answered her; "it ain't snow that's on them. It's blood."

His hands fell. He stood before her motionless, while the curled drift rose about him like a wave of the sea. He did not touch her. But she could not escape him.

His voice was an unrecognizable whisper. Before it her eagerness for death shrank and dwindled as the storm and the wind had done.

He said again: "There's blood on my hands. Yo're my dear sister. Yo're Sombra. For what I done to you, I do believe you've been strong enough to forgive me. But forgiveness don't ease me. No one knows but us three. Suppose you died, suppose he died, no one would know or guess or think of it but me.

"The hate that set it there ain't rightly my hate. The love that caused it ain't my love. Before I was born commenced the thing that ended when Mait Ransome come to me, drippin' with the lake water, and the sound of it runnin' on the schooner's deck, and the mist goin' by; and his hand stretched out an' touched me, and there was death in it; and it was like as if I died right then; and all the old fear, of the years he'd hated me and the years he hated our father, come with him, and I took him like as if I was stronger than him, with the hold and the throw Alan taught me, and he went over into the deep water, and cried as he went over, and I couldn't find him. An' livin' there on the deck, I heard him cry again and again, though he was dead and drowned through me. An' I knew what I done——"

A moment the breathless huddle of words failed. His lips moved, but without sound. Then his voice rose in a cry, high and inhuman as the cry of the wind.

"Sombra, to wake every mornin' and know! To lie down at night, and know! To see you runnin' from Alan as though you was a leper, and know why! To hear that cry in every man's voice, and see the blind face in every man's face! No one knows but me. And if I could have run into the middle of a big city, or climbed on top of a great high building, and shouted out: 'I killed an old man who was blind! Come and punish me!' I'd 'a' been 'most happy. If they'd hanged me, I'd 'a' thanked God. But to walk all the days of your life with a sin you can't pay for, because of others—to eat and drink and lie down at night forever with a crime on you which'll never be wiped out by punishment, because of others that'd be punished, too— O Christ, would there be any hell like mine if it wasn't for this way out?"

He was trembling violently, but without any effect of weakness. His twitching hands shut on hers again, irresistibly drawing her back into life. The crying of the storm went over them, and behind the storm shadowed the early night. But the world seemed still, listening to his voice.

"A long while I've walked in hell, but now there's a way out. 'A life for a life.' Them words are in the Book, and in my mind for days back. Maybe God was sorry for me a little, seein' that what I done was done in such fear that I didn't rightly know—that it was done in a minute, blind, like a dream— But now there's nothin' on earth or in hell, in life or out of it, that can make me fear any more. And I'm goin' to save you, I'm goin' to save you, I'm goin' to save you and me! I'm goin' to give a life for a life. I'm goin' to save your life for Mait Ransome's, that I couldn't save."

HIS hurried and intense pressure of speech ceased. He turned, holding her. She still struggled dumbly, but his resolution swept her on with him. She was helpless. He led her back through the little birches by the stream. They moved, stiff and glimmering in the dusk of the snow, like rods of glass. Some sense of direction, mysterious as an animal's, alone led him; for all trace of their previous passage had been obliterated long ago.

He heard a faint breath from the girl he was half-carrying.

"Alan," she whispered. "Oh, Alan——"

Was there in her overwhelmed mind the

thought that Maclear might have saved her from this—taken her from her brother, released her, himself set her free? She could fight no more. She was weighed down by a despairing acquiescence.

Salvator said, in that fierce voice, "I'm takin' you back to him."

But she knew he was not.

He might save her life. He might satisfy his own wild soul. He might set her down in the same room with Maclear. He might give her from his own arms to her husband's waiting for her. He could not, by any reparation of his, bridge the distance which she still saw clearly between them.

Her recoil and infinite distrust still possessed her. She still adhered to the conviction that she would be doing him a profound wrong if she linked his life to her own abased one. But she could struggle no more.

Perhaps for the first time her strength was utterly surrendered to the will of another.

WITH his arm about her, Salvator led her back through the snow.

The wind was dying away. The snow still fell thickly; but whereas before it had run level on the wind like dust, now it enclosed them in a tremendous whirling movement.

They went on thus a long time, a long way. He never faltered; he never hesitated. They fell once, and she lay moaning where she had fallen. She had forgotten everything now but physical suffering. He set his stiffened hands about her, dragged her to her feet, shook and struck her until once more she was impelled by his will and crept on with him.

Later, he carried her in his arms.

Then came a time when he walked double under her body. He fixed his eyes on a tiny ridge of snow, crawled toward it, passed it, saw a twig or the dry stalk of a flower emerging from the great white tide, fought toward that with enormous effort, was aware of a tree standing like a cowled shadow at some unmeasured distance; gained it after terrible strife, only to see another tree beyond that must be gained and, that gained, must be left behind. And all the while the night drew closer about them.

Then the spirit had broken the flesh. And he lay in the snow beside her, beating her with his hands, crying to her: "Just a little way, Sombra! Just a little way to go!"

She was quite conscious. But her mind, touched with the frost, was not with him. She breathed, "A long, long way."

She saw nothing but the great distance between her and her love.

"Sombra, I can't carry you no more!"

He was striking at his own body, wildly and savagely, as if the thing had betrayed and deserted him. He writhed in the snow that had taken his strength. She looked at him with great compassion, with the old look of child-kindness and close sisterhood. She whispered, "It's better this way——"

He rose to his knees in the snow. He lifted his hands to the dark and solemn cloud in which the hemlocks were lost. He lifted his face. The snow fell on it. He was suddenly quiet. He said, "What am I to do?"

"Go on, dear," she replied.

"And leave you?"

"Better—this way——"

"This ain't the way, Sombra."

No bodily exhaustion could shake his resolution. He looked at her. She was in better case than he. With her, it was not so much the body that had failed as the will to live.

"Sombra, I must go on and send Alan to you."

She said, "Go," and smiled; but he was not sure that she heard what he said, or understood it. She had taken from the bosom of her old coat a tiny bird, a minute frozen body enclosed in yellow feathers. She was holding it in her hands.

He dragged himself erect. It was as if the snow stretched out a hundred hands, pulling him to the ground. He considered her minutely and without emotion.

He knew, as one who has lived with them, all the weathers of his land. He thought that she might live an hour or so.

He looked about him.

They were on the edge of a small cleared space, in the midst of which a single ragged spruce lifted like a mast. Inch by inch he dragged her to this tree until she rested against its trunk. He could have found better shelter for her among the hemlocks, but he dared not conceal her too completely.

Against the trunk he bound her with a thin cord about her waist. Standing in the bitter dusk, he half stripped himself and wrapped her in his clothing above her own.

He returned to the hemlocks, and wrenched from them great boughs, chill and fragrant, shedding fine crystals of snow as pollen is shed from flowers. These he raised about her like little walls, and banked them with snow until she was almost enclosed. The wood, where it had been broken, was stained with blood from his torn hands.

In the same way as he measured her remaining power of passive resistance to the cold, he measured his own strength.

He thought he would just be able to reach the farm.

But he would not be able to show Maclear the way back to her.

He gave her one last look as she sat in her fragrant shelter. She was there in body, but her mind wandered. She was holding the thistle-bird as if to restore it to life against her own cold cheek, and murmuring broken words to the little thing. Under the dark branches with which he had roofed her, her breath rose in a glimmering thread of silver—like the ghost, the wraith of life.

He left her there, crossed the cleared circle about the spruce, and plunged once more into the woods.

HE WENT on. And now he was climbing a hill. On the summit was a very great tree. It was a pine. From it trailed long rags of bark that creaked and swung in the wind. He crept toward it. He was stifled in snow. Only when he raised his hands to blaze the trunk was he aware that he had been crawling up the slope on his hands and knees.

He reached the summit of the hill. Here he managed to rise to his feet again. The opposite slope reeled and flickered under its veil of falling white. To him it appeared to run like water, a vast fluid hollow into which silently poured snow, trees, rocks and deepening night itself. Swaying on his feet, he plunged down into this hollow.

At the bottom he came on a snake fence.

He found he could not climb over it. He dragged himself to the angle nearest him, set his shoulder under the top rail of that section, and threw it down; so with the next and the next; then he could step across. He did so, and went on into the open.

That tremendous wave seemed still to heave above him with its crest of frozen foam, higher than anything on earth could have been. But now he saw, very deep within its glittering and translucent heart, a star.

He could not have said whether this star was on earth or in heaven. His enduring will drove him steadily toward it.

His coat and old jersey he had left with Sombra. His shirt was stiff with frost. His whole body was so stiff and numbed that he could hardly move; it cost him an effort that was torture, that crucified the lingering consciousness, to lift hand or foot. Yet he went on.

The star sent between the branches of the trees irregular pencils of reddish light, in which the flakes of snow glowed momentarily in their descent, rosy pink as the petals of vanished peach blossom.

Then the star became a window, a window in the heaving wave of white, a window with a cracked red blind.

He stood outside it. Thought was gone from him, and the very power of speech. He knew, without thought, that Maclear was behind that red blind. But he could not call him.

He stood there, agonizing; he could not make a sound. His cold lips were closed on his voice.

He staggered close to the wall, lifted his stiff hand and sent it crashing through the lower pane.

Then he waited, leaning with his face to the wall.

He had done all he could.

All about him were many waters rising—rising like the surf of the lake, whiter than it. They were leaping, living, soaring into one poised breaker fit to blot out the world.

Maclear, on the great path of dazzling and whirling light, was running to him through those waters. Maclear was calling his name. He could not reply. He felt himself raised and carried into the light. Maclear was looking at him, speaking to him. It was inexpressibly sweet to him to be thus cared for, as in the old happy island-days. He tried to smile back at Alan, and indeed some gleam of his old transforming smile passed on his half-frozen face.

Some one else besides Alan was here.

"Is it Salvator? I ain't seen him for years. This here's brandy. Can you get it down him?"

"Wait. Wait till I lift his head. There! There now! Yes; it's Sal— O my God, look at his hands!"

The remembered voice broke. Then steadied to an appeal that must have reached Salvator if he had indeed been dead.

"Sal, Sal, *where is she?*"

Twice and three times, with a terrible wrenching effort, he tried to speak. He shook where he lay on the rag rug with his head on Maclear's knees. Then the brandy did its work. They heard the ghost of a voice. Maclear put his ear to the blued lips. The words were clear, quick and distinct, though Salvator was hardly conscious.

"There's a gap in the snake fence beyond the peach orchard. Make for it. From there go up the hill to a big pine. From the big pine make for a little clearin' with a spruce in the middle. She's there, livin'."

He lifted his hands a moment, gazing at them dimly. Then he smiled again. He said: "I blazed the trail the whole way. Sometimes with the knife, sometimes—with this——"

The crimsoned hands fell. He stirred again, for the whole visible universe was sucked up and up, towering into that great breaker; faces, voices, lights rushed up with the rest, soared, flickered, vanished away. He tried to push Alan into safety, but he was too weak. His arms fell.

The great wave fell.

"IF ONLY Jim was here to go with you!"

"This is my job." said Maclear. There was a familiarity about the words.

He lifted Sal and laid him on the worn horsehair couch. Mrs. Mackerrow went to him at once. Maclear could not spare a moment from that which he had to do.

He rapidly filled a pocket-flask with brandy. There was an old mackinaw coat of Jim Mackerrow's hanging behind the door. He put this on in preference to his own, because it was short; he put the flask in his pocket, together with an electric torch he was lucky enough to have with him. There was coffee heating on the back of the stove; he found a bottle and filled it with coffee; Mrs. Mackerrow said, "There's flannel in the drawer of the dresser." He wrapped the hot bottle in flannel, and stowed that away also. Then he was ready.

He asked the woman busy about Salvator, "How far would you think it is?"

"Not above two miles. You'll have to carry her back."

"I know."

Their eyes met. Mrs. Mackerrow's face showed no emotion; only the wrinkles had deepened till they looked like scars.

Maclear said quietly: "I'll bring her back alive. Be ready for us." He spoke as if he were stating a fact already accomplished.

He was so sure of reaching her in time that he was not impatient. He was not aware of the source of this certainty; only that once more they were to meet face to face and speak with one another.

There was joy in this foreknowledge. It showed in him. The weary-faced woman looked at him with her strange passion of impersonal jealousy. "I'll be ready," she said. "And you—you be glad as you're here to do this for her—to seek her an' find her an' carry her home."

There was an echo of music in the words, as of things long-remembered— "Seek her and find her and carry her home." On them, Maclear went out. When he had shut the outer door behind him, it was as if he had closed a door between death and life.

The wind had almost ceased. It was apparent only as a sound in distant tree-tops, as if a tide moved there. A great white silence was enclosing the world with the night.

Snow was falling steadily, and in larger and more scattered flakes. Maclear found it possible to follow Salvator's track through the orchard. The snow was nearly to his knees; light and dry, it seemed easy to walk through as drifted leaves. There was no surface for snow-shoes. He wore a pair of long boots borrowed from Mackerrow, with corrugated soles that gave him a grip on the ice under the snow.

As he followed Salvator's trail, he felt that he yet followed another way—a way that had been laid down for him to tread week beyond week, month beyond month. He felt that every least incident of his life was in some manner linked with what he now did, that in some fashion this track he now followed was but like the last least twig of a tree of events whose roots reached back to the unremembered past and bound his dead years to this living moment.

He stood at last on the edge of a small clearing, a silver circle of unstained snow under the night. In its midst, a solitary spruce lifted as straight as a mast. The great stars seemed to burn among its boughs with an added luster.

Maclear crossed the clearing softly, as if he were entering a room.

At the foot of this spruce he saw a little pent house, a tent made of the branches of the hemlocks, their delicate dark sprays mounded with snow. A peak and a furrow of snow—in the clear round of torchlight this was all. He went toward it.

The blank opening of the tent of branches showed him nothing. It was void as the blank among the stars. Then for the first time he was afraid.

He was afraid to turn the beam of the torch into the evergreen tent.

He dropped on his knees before it, looking at it.

Then he saw the faintest flicker of the air, a stirring thread of silver above the interstices of the boughs, a vapor so frail that it was almost imperceptible. But it was life.

He stretched out his hand toward the curtaining sprays. It trembled. Then he heard a sound. Again he waited.

It was a sound frail and flickering as the mist of her breath, the ghostliest running murmur of monotonous and tender crooning such as a bird makes in its sleep to the nestlings under its wings.

He turned the beam of the torch into the narrow opening.

The icicles on the hemlock dazzled into little rods of glass, a diamond fringe. Then under them and out of darkness her face sprang into being. It was sad and very pure, as he had seen it in the hay; the head was a little inclined; the closed eyes seemed to be looking pitifully downward.

Her lips were parted, and from them rose that silver thread which told him at first that she lived.

THE sight of her so struck upon his heart that he could not move. Then his gaze followed the direction of her shut eyes.

He saw that she held in her muffled hands a little golden-green bird, so light and small it lay there like a single fallen feather. The cold had hold of her; though not unto death, he thought passionately, not unto death; and out of the dream given her she was still talking to the bird.

He sprang to his feet, laid hold of the fringed boughs and scattered them. The starlight turned the curve and shadow of her face to snow and night. For an instant he thought that she was dissolving, body and spirit, into the substance of the night and the snow surrounding them.

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

Then he took her head on his shoulder, forced brandy between her lips, rubbed her hands with brandy, her marble cheeks with snow. He began to call her, as he had called her in the hut under the maple: "Sombra! Sombra, dear love, come back to me!"

Was there any distance at which she would not have heard his voice and obeyed it? Presently she came.

"Speak to me, dear love!"

"Dear love," she said.

"Drink this, Sombra. It's warm. It will do you good. Give me your hands; let me warm them for you—this way, against my heart."

"My heart," she said.

He held her, he felt, as she had held the bird. No passion was in him—only an overpowering pity and tenderness. He thought his bird had this time almost flown, escaped almost beyond his reach. But he had caught her in time; she lived, though full sense was not yet returned to her. Her lips, so faithful in denying him, answered him only with echoes out of a dream.

Their low voices did not disturb the silence.

"I've found you, my love, my poor girl!"

"Poor girl," sighed the little wandering voice.

"I've come to carry you home."

"Home!"

"Yes, Sombra. Yes, Sombra. Home to rest."

"Rest."

"Just a minute. In a minute we'll go."

"Go," she said.

The stillness took the little echoed word. It seemed to become part of the dark, the cold, the icy stars so high above them. In the narrow and steady beam of the torch her eyes opened and gazed into his. Solemnly, with the look of farewell, she regarded him—from a great distance.

She whispered, "Have you come to say good-by to me?"

"Dear, this is life. Not death."

"Death," she breathed. She did not fully understand him. She went on, "It's better this way."

"Oh, my poor child, what way?"

"It's better—if I'd lived, you'd have been ashamed o' me, even without—the other. Alan, it's better this way, after all."

She thought she was dying. Looking at the face that was upturned to his, ivory-clear in the electric beam, he knew that she was deliberately nursing herself out of life—away from him.

For a minute, crouched there in the snow, he was silent. Her body he held there in his arms; her beauty, which had first claimed him, was there—the eyes, the lips, the generous hands, the dark hair with which once he had been bound. And he knew they were nothing, that in a little time he might hold them, and these things be no more to him than if he held indeed the substance of the night and the snow. For that dearer she, the hidden self, the living Sombra—she was not here; she was slipping away, escaping from him for his sake, looking back at him sadly from the far side of a great separation.

IN THAT moment, every force of his body and his spirit was bent to reach her—to bridge the gulf. He became in fact a being of one single purpose; he breathed, his blood coursed, his brain perceived only for this and to this end. And what he wanted, what he must reach, was not the fair flesh he held, not even the love for him which had never wavered, but that deep inner unity, that acceptance of each by the other, that communion of knowledge and compassion, which is true marriage, and without which he could not live.

In that moment, if her beauty had withered and fallen from her, he could hardly have known, he was so little aware of it. He looked upward at the stars, feeling a flash of wonder for what purpose he was here beneath them, for what they and the mast of the tree and the austere snows had been set as witnesses.

Then he raised her so that again she rested against the tree and not in his arms. He stood away from her. But it was as if he stepped forward like a man stepping to the last test of his strength, to the last round of a fight, to the last decisive act of a great struggle. He was less than four feet away from her; but between his soul and hers stretched a distance before which the distance of star from star seemed a very little thing.

He must span that distance or he must lose her, the divine part of her humanity in which his need was rooted, forever.

He saw that distance as if with bodily eyes, and his soul sent up a great cry that there must be a way over, that there must be a bridge for that abyss—or life was indeed a betrayal, and men did well to curse God and die.

That cry of his made no sound, though the tremendous stillness of the night apprehended it. He said to her aloud, "Sombra, I love you."

"I love you," came her echo, as if from the other shore, whither she was deliberately drifting.

He called her, harshly and sternly: "Come back to me. Sombra, come back." He thought the blank and beautiful calm of her face, so clear in the circle of white light, was troubled by a shadow of remembered pain.

"Come back," she echoed him.

"Yes. Come back. And listen——"

"I love you."

"You know how I love you. I know how you love me. You'd kill yourself—and you'd kill me or leave me; it's the same—before you'd do me a wrong. But here's something you don't know. Once your love was bigger than mine. You loved me more than I loved you. You told me so once. You were quite right. But it isn't so any longer. In these weeks I've been following you, it's come to be untrue. Now I love you more, with a bigger love than yours is for me."

A sense of wrong appeared vaguely to stir in her. She looked at him piteously, as if he were saying hard things of one dear to her and already dead. At another time such a look from her would have broken him. Now it passed over him as the air passed, and the shadows. She seemed to say, "Can there be a greater love than that which lays down life to save love from a stain?" He seemed to say: "There can. The love which asks nothing but to share that stain."

His eyes were bright and still. His spirit commanded hers. There, in that lonely battle-ground of souls, he was infinitely her master. Yet he felt, outside himself, an approaching mastery—something that used him as the sand and the mist and the snow were used to the perfecting of a year, something made, shaped, appointed, and now summoned in the fulness of time.

His voice was solemn and even stern. At this hour, he used no tenderness.

"I love you so," he said, "that I must leave your will free, just because of it. For fear, in some unearthly way, I should kill you if I didn't, blot you out—not *this*, but the real you, the thing in you that must come to me free as a bird or not at all——"

For an instant his voice faltered. He looked down at her, and a great shiver wrenched him, his face contorted, he seemed fighting some invisible thing that had gripped him by the throat. Then again he was calm. The attention which she gave him was now a keener and more living one. He saw that he was holding her from the sleep of the snow. But the reproach of her look was unchanged, and unchanged the distance across which she regarded him.

She repeated, with monotonous entreaty:

"Leave me an' go. Leave me an' go."

"I'll never leave you. But I'll not carry you back to the farm without your consent."

Even to that extent he would leave her free.

"Save yourself, Alan."

"Life's nothing to me without you."

Not in his hands, he thought; not in his hands. A sense was on him that all this was long appointed, that the words they used, the broken phrases exchanged between them, had been rehearsed by a thousand great voices, and told where there is neither voice nor language, from star to star.

Her shadowy eyes besought him; her voice drifted to him mournfully across that void, speaking still in an echo of remembered words.

"I ain't fit for you. We wasn't fit for you before. O Christ of pity, what are we now?"

She must have repeated these words to herself a thousand times.

"Why aren't you fit for me, my wife?"

Her childlike look of reproach changed and wandered. From another plaintive memory she echoed, "We're poor, ugly, common—we've nothing——"

"That never separated us."

Her eyes widened; her lips twisted; her breath was broken. For a moment she looked ugly, crazed. She shaped words with her cold lips; her hands struck together. Presently he heard her say: "He done it. At last. With his hand——"

"Well, Sombra?" he asked solemnly.

There was something fanatic in her eyes, in her ardor of sacrifice. "Love," she said clearly and, as he knew, finally, "I'm the sister of one that killed a man and broke my heart doin' it. In all the whole world now, I ain't sure of anything, for it was my own brother that done this, whose mind I thought I knew like my own mind, whose heart I thought was clear to me as my heart, though sometimes, in a kind o' dream, I was afraid— And all the time, that what he did was hid in him, like a flame in the dark, ready to leap out an' burn. If that flame was hid in him, so near to me, so dear to me, son of her that bore me, too, what may be hid in me?" She clenched her weak hands on her breast, but they weakly fell. All her strength had gone into her words, and these toiled in a ghost of her deep, sweet voice, like a bell, tolling for the end of hope. She said: "I don't know what's in me. Evil, perhaps. I don't trust even my own self. I dread myself. And I won't pass that dread, that lookin' forward in fear, to you—or to your children."

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

Exhausted, she slid deeper into the snow from which she had a little raised herself. He did not offer to touch her. He said quietly, "Is that your last word, Sombra?"

"My last word, if you've any pity for me——"

He stood looking down at her. He heard himself say, "Is there nothing that will change you?"

"Oh, nothin'! For I love you."

"Not pity for Sal, or for me? Or the child?"

AGAIN she drifted and wandered momentarily in a dream—a tragic dream, for she said: "Oh, think if it grew up, and you was watchin' it all the time to see the bad strain come out in it! Think if you was harsh to it, an' me not there! Think if you was in your heart ashamed of it! It's better this way."

She murmured words, words to a fallen bird, words of the long roads and the strange towns, of longing for him and fear for him. At another time, to hear her would have moved him beyond expression. But not now.

Another fan of roseate light like the light of dawn spread among the stars and went out. Another breath of wind like the wind of the spirit moved among the branches and went out. Another moment, for loss or for salvation, was given to the sons of men—and went out.

He heard himself, very far off, saying again, "Will nothing in life bridge that space you've set between us?"

"No."

"Yes," said Maclear in a strange voice; "one thing will."

All his senses were suddenly and terribly merged into one burning comprehension of soul and flesh. He was all at once crushed, deafened, blinded by something imminent which partook of great space, great sound, great light. It was like the instantaneous opening of a door; but it was more than this. It was like the rush of tremendous wings; but it was more than this. It was like the overwhelming return of vision to one born blind; but it was more than this. No words could measure or express the depth and height of that revelation.

It was intolerable pain. Yet with it he had an extraordinary consciousness of freedom, of a release that not even love at its highest had brought him. At that moment he was released even of his need of Sombra. He possessed himself again.

He stood rigidly still, staring upward. The moment had come.

In it the suspended words, the void, the tree rode upon his eyes, sparkled into motes, vanished. The snow upon the world, the world itself, vanished. Sombra vanished. He was alone—facing that which had been coming to meet him ever since he started to escape from it—facing that necessity which had followed him as faithfully as he had followed Sombra, and perhaps for the same end. He knew.

ACROSS the gulf sprang the bridge, a strand of fire by which he might cross to her.

He trembled before the thing that drove him, but he did not falter. He spoke, but the words he used seemed worn, like coins, with handling, as though they had been a long time current in his mind, though they were so new they appalled him.

"Sombra, you take to yourself that poor boy's sin because you are his sister—a deed done under an accumulation of fear, instantly repented, terribly suffered for. And you say that the shadow of it makes you unfit to be my wife."

He looked at her solemnly, with a remote compassion such as she had shown him.

"Oh, my poor love," he said slowly, "do you know to what kind of man you have given a love greater than that you give your brother?"

Her gaze, which had faltered and flickered, was now unalterably upon his face. She, too, was aware of a time fulfilled.

"Do you remember the first night I came to you? I was in great trouble. You held me from it. You covered it up from me, with your beauty and your strength and your loyalty.

"You might have gone on covering my trouble from me. You might have been merciful as the snow. You would have heard of it in time. But my part in it you would have taken from me as I chose to give it to you. And you would have believed in me."

Again for a moment he was wrenched and shaken as if with strong pain. Her eyes were watching him now as if he were the only thing in the world. He mastered himself. He slowly held out his hands.

"Sombra, if there's any stain on poor Sal, it's on me, too.

"If there's a shadow, unknown to any but ourselves, that must rest on him always for what he did in that one second of inherited passion, it's on me, too, and without the excuse of that inheritance.

"Sombra, what blind fear drove him to do, the wish to save money drove me. He struck in a panic. I measured and calculated. And four lives paid for what I did.

"And one of those men I killed—by one dishonesty, common as the dirt it is, and truly as if I'd blown his brains out with a gun—one of those men, Sombra, was my own brother!"

He waited.

But while he waited, a peace like that of the snow entered into him and possessed him.

At the moment when he had bound himself to his own deed, he knew freedom. At the moment when he had accepted his own responsibility, he knew release.

And that release and freedom were not dependent upon happiness, nor even upon love, nor upon life, nor upon death.

With those last words he spoke, time ceased, life ceased.

At last he heard a voice, indistinguishable from the wind soft in the tree.

"Is this true?"

"Quite true."

"*You?*"

"I, Sombra. Your husband. Sal killed Mait Ransome out of fear. He didn't mean to. I killed my brother to save a few thousand dollars. I didn't mean to, either. But I did it." For the first time he looked from the strong, austere stars to her eyes. "You, love?" he said gently. "You not fit to be my wife? It's I that have never been fit to be your husband. Not because the lives of four men are on my hands. But because I said those hands were clean. Not because that sin's laid on my shoulders. But because I was a coward and refused to bear it. Not because that account's rendered to me. But because I ran from the debt."

He was still, looking again at the stars. With a faint, low sound she stared at him.

AFTER a while she breathed. "All the while, ever since you come to me that night in the blowin' sand an' said, 'Hold me,' an' I held you in my arms because I knew you was in trouble—all the while, this has been in your mind?"

"Yes, Sombra."

"All the while when we first loved each other, all the while it was summer on the island—this was true?"

"All that while, Sombra."

"It was so all the while we was plannin' our life together.

"Yes."

Her awestruck whisper came to him.

"It was like buildin' life itself on runnin' sand in a mist——"

"Yes."

"*You*— Oh, you that I've given all to, why didn't you tell me? I asked you, sittin' that day under the gold poplars. Why didn't you tell me then?"

"I was afraid."

"Of losin' me?"

"Yes."

She said again: "*You!* You that I was willin' to live an' die for—you that I held so high above me—you whose hand I felt unworthy to touch, an' wondered how you could look at me, like as if you was a king?"

"My poor girl!"

"That was you?"

"That was I. A weak, sinful man, Sombra—suffering for his sin."

All the time she had been speaking with an increasing strength. Life seemed to be flowing back upon her. And she was laying hold on it. Word by word, her voice sounded nearer to him. But he could not look at her.

"An' that poor lady—that day on the beach—she knew?"

"She knew. She came to forgive me."

"Ah!"

"I didn't want it then. Some day—perhaps—I'll ask her for it again. On my knees."

There was another long silence. Then he heard a small, low sound.

It was a sound full of life as the running of the first thread of ice-free water in the spring. It was the sound of her tears.

She was weeping wildly. Not as she had wept in her dreams of wandering from him in her dream of snow. But full-hearted, as a woman weeps for a hurt to the man she loves.

It was like a resurrection—like the first break of the green life through the snows. The ice of doubt had melted away.

He could not have moved. A great weakness smote him and held him motionless. But she was coming to him.

She crept to him through the snow, weeping aloud. She clung to his shaking hands, striving to draw him down to her. He heard words at last through her wild crying.

"All this time, an' me not to know! I don't understand; I can't make out the rights an' wrongs. You say you done this thing. It don't matter. Dear, the givin's all— Rights and wrongs don't matter. It's you that's done it. And above it all I love you— But oh, my pore boy, my dear love, to bear it all alone this great while when I could 'a' borne it along with you!"

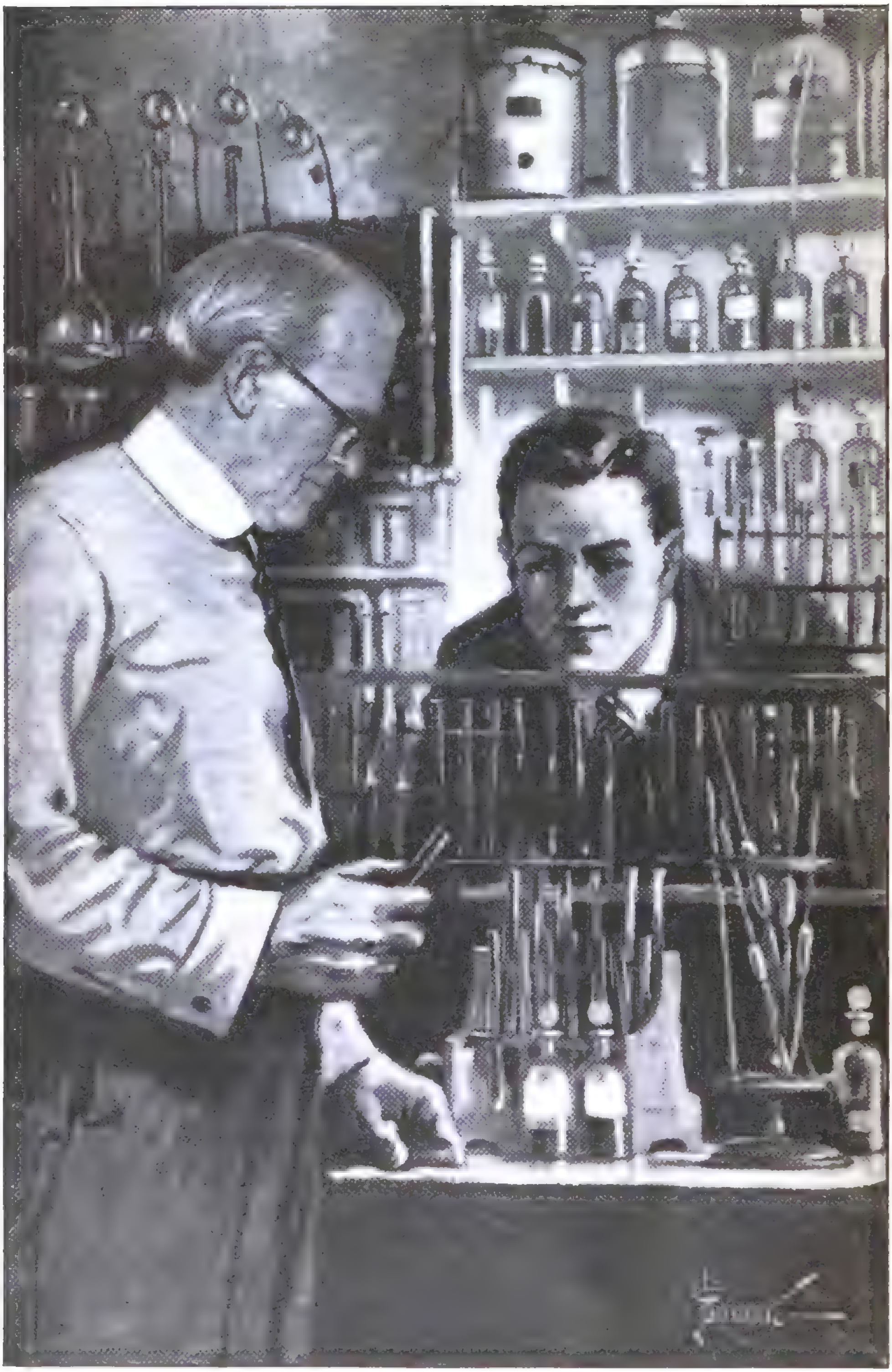
As once before, she forgot everything but his need, and divinely gave from her great heart, once more opened wide to him. He yielded to those weak, cold hands, dropped to his knees in the snow beside her and hid his face.

All roads were ended here, and they were at home. For a little they remembered nothing of sin or grief or separation. They only knew that they were once more together.

After the sound of the trumpet must come a great stillness. They were still. The stars, the snows, the trees were the only angels of their resurrection to life.

Then, having sought and found his love, through the solemn woods he carried her to the farm.

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922



"Those are the tubes that particularly concern us," said Dr. Goodrich. "They contain the blood that we are testing—blood from the murderous knife I just showed you."

Half an Hour with Dr. Goodrich

Test-tube Necromancy

In Which the Secrets of the Laboratory Are Revealed to the Layman, Who Gets a Fascinating Story as Well—a Story That Gives the Blood a New Importance

By Stoddard Goodhue

Illustration by E. J. Dinsmore

IT WAS a fortunate chance that led me, one day, to ask Dr. Daniel Goodrich whether the microscope or the laboratory test-tube had proved, in his experience, the more valuable implement as an adjunct in the performance of those feats of wizardry in the way of scientific sleuthing with which his name is associated.

The distinguished medical examiner regarded me for some moments with a quizzical smile before he answered. Then he said,

"To that, as to so many other queries, Emerson furnishes the most satisfactory reply."

"Emerson!" I demurred. "Emerson? What did Emerson know about microscopes and test-tubes?"

Dr. Goodrich was still smiling.

"He knew quite enough to furnish a comprehensive answer to your question," he said. "Though, to be sure, his answer has the true Emersonian quality in that it makes no mention of either of the instruments in question. The answer is given symbolically when the philosopher makes the mouse remind the mountain that 'all is well and wisely put,' adding, 'If I cannot carry forests on my back, neither can you crack a nut.' In other words, when you have a job that calls for a microscope, you need a microscope; when you have a job that calls for a test-tube, you need a test-tube."

"I see the point," I admitted; "but I cannot see that it gives me many new ideas about the relative merits of microscopes and test-tubes."

"Well," said the physician meditatively, "perhaps it doesn't. But to get specific ideas you must consider specific cases; and if you will come round to my laboratory this afternoon, you may see a little demonstration that will perhaps help you to answer your own question.

When I came to the medical examiner's office that afternoon, I found the physician himself seated before the microscope, apparently inspecting a specimen on an ordinary glass slide.

"Take a glimpse at that," he said, "and you will see all that the microscope can tell us about this particular case."

The specimen showed an indeterminate field in the midst of which here and there could be detected small objects recognizable as blood-corpuscles.

"You see that the specimen is blood, and that is about all you do see," commented the physician. "One cannot say even whether it is human blood. Rather odd, isn't it, that the blood-corpuscles of all mammals should be so similar as to be indistinguishable? It takes man off his pedestal a bit, doesn't it, to reflect that his blood-relationship to the beasts of the field is so tangibly hall-marked?"

"I don't know that we need mind that," I said; "but it is a little disconcerting for the pathologist to be obliged to admit such limitation of his microscope. But what about the test-tubes? Can they help us?"

"That is what we are coming to," explained Dr. Goodrich. "I introduced the microscope exhibit merely to emphasize the contrast. Now let us go into the laboratory and examine some specimens of this same blood in a different way."

AS WE came to the laboratory door, the physician paused a moment and seemed to reflect. Then he stepped over to a table by the window. He opened a little drawer and beckoned me to his side.

"This is Exhibit A," he said, smiling.

"It is a murderous-looking knife," I said.

"It is more than murderous-looking merely," replied the physician. "It is, in point of fact, a murder-weapon. The stains that you see here on the handle were made by human blood."

"Was it blood from this weapon that we have just examined under the microscope?"

Dr. Goodrich nodded.

"And we are about to examine blood of the same specimen in the test-tubes," he explained. "To give further interest to the matter," he added, "I may tell you that the person who used this knife with deadly effect now probably imagines that the weapon is reposing safely at the bottom of the ocean."

The physician was smiling, and his eyes twinkled, as they always do when he is contemplating something amusing.

"The murderer would be worried indeed if he knew that we were about to subject his weapon to scientific tests," he commented. "But from our standpoint it is fortunate that the knife is here instead of being hidden at the bottom of the sea. However," he added reflectively, "it remains to be seen whether possession of the weapon will really help us to solve the mystery that enshrouds the case."

It was a case, I learned, that owed its notoriety to peculiar circumstances, foremost among which was the fact that the victim was a beautiful young woman who had met her death on board a transatlantic steamer. According to the newspaper accounts, the young woman who had taken passage on the steamship *Cordova* at Naples under the name Signora Cerino, and who was murdered in her stateroom between midnight and six in the morning of the fifth day of the voyage, was in reality an Albanian—or, as others stated, a Montenegrin—princess, traveling *incognita* and with an important diplomatic mission, the character of which was but vaguely hinted at.

Whatever the truth of this report, there was no question that the young woman was at once extremely beautiful and exceedingly intelligent. Whether or not she was of aristocratic lineage, she had both the appearance and manner to justify the tradition; and although she had but a single maid for traveling companion, she had engaged the most luxurious suite on the upper deck, and the quality of her wardrobe and her entire traveling entourage proclaimed her a person of affluence.

Yet it was a matter of general remark that she did not hold herself aloof. She was constantly seen on deck or in the cabin of the ship, at first accompanied by her maid, but subsequently escorted by one or another of a dozen or so male passengers who appeared promptly to have made her acquaintance. Not infrequently three or four of these were grouped about her—always, apparently, a very respectful company.

Reviewing the circumstances later, no one appeared to be able to recall that any particular man had been seen in company with Signora Cerino oftener than a dozen or so others, or that the young woman herself had seemed to manifest a preference for one escort rather than another. With one and all she manifested a cordiality of greeting and response that was tempered with just the flavor of aristocratic reserve calculated to stimulate interest while holding in check any propensity to undue familiarity.

Such details, after all, suggest only the ordinary development of shipboard acquaintance where a beautiful young woman of rather democratic propensities is traveling without male escort. But when, on the morning of the sixth day out of Naples—fairly in mid-ocean, therefore—a stewardess, entering the unlocked stateroom, found the young woman lying as if asleep but in reality dead, with a stab-wound through her heart, all details of the experiences of the preceding days naturally assumed interest and significance.

As a matter of course, the ship's surgeon was summoned; and the captain himself took personal charge of the investigation. But the result of the combined efforts of the investigators—so the newspaper reports stated—was to reveal not a single clue of any kind. The murderer appeared to have come and gone without leaving a trace.

What I now saw in Dr. Goodrich's laboratory showed me, however, that more was known than had come to the attention of the reporters. Nothing had been published about the discovery of the murder-weapon; yet here it was in possession of the famous criminologist, being subjected to his searching analysis.

"A rather amusing complication, is it not?" the examiner was saying.

"Not from the standpoint of the murderer," I replied. "But a highly interesting complication, surely."

"It furnishes absolutely the only clue in a puzzling murder case," said Dr. Goodrich, suddenly become grave in speech and manner. "Let us see whether the test-tubes can reveal anything that can be helpful."

I had hoped that the physician would explain how the murder-weapon came to be in his possession, but he replaced the knife in the drawer without further comment.

A CHEMICAL laboratory, with its glass-stoppered bottles and intricate glass tubes and paraphernalia, more or less meaningless to the uninitiated, is always fascinating.

Now our attention at once focused on a rack standing on the table in the center of the laboratory and containing five or six rows, one above the other, of glass test-tubes, each tube about half filled with a transparent liquid of pale-amber color.

"These test-tubes," Dr. Goodrich explained, "contain solutions of blood of various kinds of animals, including our own species. If you will step to the other side of the table, you will see that there are labels on each test-tube. They are purposely so arranged as to be invisible from this side. I am going to stand here and conduct the experiment by dropping fluid from these bottles"—indicating a number of stoppered bottles on the table before him—"into the test-tubes. I shall then tell you, in each case, the result of the test. In fact, you can observe it for yourself, and you can tell me whether the label, which I cannot see, confirms the conclusions I draw from the successive observations."

As the physician spoke, he took up one of the small bottles and uncorked it, and with a pipette drew some of the fluid from it and prepared to inject two or three drops into the first test-tube.

"You observe that the fluid in each test-tube is now absolutely transparent," he said. "As we drop the test-fluid into the tube, there may or may not be a change. All that will happen, in any event, is that the clear fluid will become a little cloudy. In other words, a white precipitate will form. When this occurs, it will mean that the fluid in the particular test-tube that shows this cloudiness has responded to the test-fluid. It is called a 'precipitin' test, because the white precipitate to which I refer is formed only under certain critical conditions."

"All of which is obscure enough to be interesting," I commented. "Please be a little more explicit. What, for example, is your test-fluid?"

Dr. Goodrich smiled. I knew that he was enjoying my mystification. But I knew also that he would presently clarify the whole matter, and I gathered from what he had said that the test he was about to make had altogether exceptional interest. He injected several drops of the test-fluid into a dozen successive test-tubes. Then he said:

"Even if the test is successful, the precipitate may not form instantly. But it will appear in the course or two or three minutes—or else I shall know that the result is negative." A momentary pause; then he pointed to one of the test-tubes, and to a second and a third.

"See," he said; "a little cloudiness is beginning in three of the tubes. That tells us something. Let me finish dropping the test-solution into the other tubes, and then I will tell you what the little white cloud means."

I watched eagerly and saw that two or more of the tubes—five in all—showed the formation of cloudiness. It was as if a few drops of milk had been poured into these tubes. Dr. Goodrich nodded his head approvingly.

"Now you are in position to check the

results," he said. "You can read the labels at the top of the test-tubes, but from my side of the table they are quite invisible. I assure you that I know nothing about the arrangement of the tubes. They were placed here, quite at random, by an assistant, in my absence from the laboratory. But we observe that five of the tubes, out of the hundred or so, have had their contents clouded by the introduction of the test-fluid. If our experiment is working as it should, you will find that the labels on these cloudy tubes show that they contain blood of some member of the cat family. This one"—he indicated with his finger—"is probably labeled 'House-Cat.' The others may be labeled 'Lion' or 'Tiger' or 'Leopard.' But they all are members of the cat family. Am I right?"

I leaned over to inspect the labels, and in a moment was able to report that the prediction was fully verified. The tube in which the precipitate had first appeared did indeed contain the blood of the house cat, and the other four bore the names of the big felines he had mentioned and of the lynx, another member of the tribe.

"All according to schedule," he commented, when I had read off the names. "Now I will make a similar test with fluid from another bottle, and I will predict the results. The final test of a scientific experiment," he added, "is to enable us to prophesy. I will now put a few drops of the fluid from this second bottle into each of the test-tubes. I prophesy that, as before, most of them will remain unclouded, but that several will show the white precipitate, and that each one that does show this precipitate will be found by you to be labeled with the name of some member of the dog tribe—either the domesticated dog itself or some wolf or fox or jackal—in short, a canine.

THE test was proceeding as the physician spoke, and a minute or two later the results he had predicted had taken place.

"Very good!" Dr. Goodrich commented. "These tests were made partly to verify our method. I wanted to convince you that there is something savoring of necromancy in the experiment we are now performing. But so far we have only verified what the labels on the test-tubes show you at a glance. What I want you to observe, however, is that several of the test-tubes—you can see which ones, though the labels are invisible to me—bear blank labels. Those are the tubes that particularly concern us. They contain the blood that we are testing—blood from the murderous knife that I just showed you."

I inspected the tubes with renewed interest. Quite as the examiner had said, six or eight of the tubes, scattered here and there, bore blank labels. The fluid in all of these was still transparent as at the beginning.

Dr. Goodrich took up another bottle.

"In point of fact," he explained, "there are two types of specimens in the unlabeled test-tubes. If you will look again, I think you will see there is a little penciled cross on some of these labels and not on others."

I nodded assent, and the explanation continued: "That is to distinguish between the two specimens. I have reason to believe that the blood in the tubes that bear the pencil-mark is human blood. Whether or not the other specimens are human blood I as yet do not know. But now I am going to make a test that you will find genuinely interesting. The bottle that I now open contains the test-fluid for human blood. I will put a few drops from this bottle into each of the ninety tubes or so that have not shown a reaction to our previous tests. You can see that several of the tubes are labeled as containing human blood. I do not know where these are, nor do I know the location of the tubes with the blank labels. But I prophesy that the tubes which, from your point of view, are labeled as containing human blood will become cloudy when I put drops of this fluid into them. I prophesy also that the tubes that you can see to bear the pencil-mark will similarly become turbid. As to the other unlabeled tubes, I make no prophecy. We shall see what we shall see."

A minute or two later, things had developed in the test-tubes exactly as predicted. The tubes labeled 'Human Blood' and the four tubes that were unlabeled but bore the penciled check now showed the precipitate. The other four unlabeled test-tubes, together with those that bore the names of various animals, remained as transparent as at the beginning of the test. I reported the result after inspecting the labels. The physician was smiling broadly.

"You see that the test-tube is doing

things for us that the microscope could not do," he commented. "I have made the test in this way in order that it should be entirely convincing. I think you must be fully convinced that the tubes with the pencil-marked labels contain human blood. I told you that this was suspected before, but it was not really known. So we have made a positive and definite gain—in the direction, I may say, of the solution of a murder mystery—through the experiment as we have thus far conducted it. But it is perhaps equally important that the other unlabeled tubes have shown no response. This proves that they do not contain human blood. Our previous tests show that they do not contain the blood of any member of the cat tribe or of the dog tribe. But that is as far as the test goes up to this point. It remains to find out what kind of blood they do contain."

THE experimenter paused for a few moments, and seemed to hesitate. He had taken up another bottle, presumably with more test-fluid, but he set this down and stepped over to the table by the laboratory window. Again he opened the little drawer and took out the murder-weapon.

"The blood in the test-tubes with the pencil-check," he said, "is from the blade of this knife. You have just seen it demonstrated as human blood. But there are also stains at the base of the knife-blade and in crevices of the handle that are apparently of different origin. They also are blood stains, as the microscope shows. A little of this has been dissolved off and placed in the unlabeled test-tubes that bear no pencil-marks, there on the rack. I thought it would interest you to know just what we are doing, so I show you this knife again before we proceed with our experiment."

"It would interest me also," I ventured, "to know just how you came to have this knife in your possession. You have told me that the murderer supposes the knife to be at the bottom of the ocean. If it isn't an official secret, I would like to have that cryptic remark explained."

The physician was smiling broadly.

"It *is* an official secret—very decidedly so," he admitted presently. "But I don't think there will be any harm in letting you share it—with the understanding that, for the moment, you give the matter no publicity."

Of course I assented, and the physician proceeded to tell me in some detail the story of the finding of the murder-weapon. It appeared that the knife had been found by a deck-hand on the *Cordova*. He had made the discovery in the early morning—in fact, two or three hours before the ship's officers had knowledge of the tragedy.

The deck-hand had found the dagger-like hunting-knife, with the point of its four-inch blade deeply imbedded in the wooden railing at the side of the ship. The weapon projected horizontally, as if some one had thrust it sidewise into the wood, or perhaps had thrown it from across the deck. It was rather a curious place to find such a weapon; but the deck-hand perhaps would not have thought a great deal about it had he not noticed that the blade of the knife was stained with something that looked very much like blood, and that several drops of the same fluid appeared to have spattered from the knife against the railing.

The latter observation was not made until the man had pulled the knife from the wood, where it stuck rather tenaciously, suggesting that it had been thrust with some force, and was on the point of closing it to put it in his pocket. It then occurred to him that he had better show it to the officers.

The second mate, to whose attention the matter was first drawn, appears to have been a man not especially gifted with imagination; for he did not take immediate steps to ascertain whether the affair had portentous significance. Indeed, although he retained the knife, he seemed not to have given the thing more than passing attention until the ship was roused, two or three hours later, by the discovery of the tragic death of Signora Cerino.

Then the mate brought forth the knife and told the story as it had been told him by the deck-hand; and it required no great acumen on the part of the captain and the ship's surgeon and two or three others to note that the blood-stained knife had lodged in the railing directly opposite the window of the stateroom in which the woman had been stabbed to death, and to draw the inference that the murderer had thrown the knife through the window, presumably with the intention of hurling it into the ocean.

"Had the flight of the weapon been directed two inches higher, or as much lower," Dr. Goodrich explained, "it would have missed the rail, and would have found a secure resting-place a mile or two under water. The murderer himself, whoever he may be, probably rested secure in the assumption that the telltale weapon had been thus effectively disposed of."

"The next time he commits a murder he will be more careful," I suggested, meeting the physician's half-facetious mood.

Dr. Goodrich's face became serious.

"He will never have opportunity to commit another murder if our test-tubes do their duty," he said very gravely.

"I confess I do not see how the test-tubes can possibly help you much in a case like that," I ventured.

"It does seem like a rather vague clue," he admitted, "considering that there were more than four hundred passengers on the ship." He stopped short and walked slowly back to the table where the test-tubes stood. "However, vague clues are more interesting than obvious ones," he added.

Taking up the experiment where he had left it, Dr. Goodrich used first one test-solution and then another, with the result that the fluids in successive groups of tubes became turbid. Finally, only four tubes out of the entire hundred remained unchanged. And these four were the ones that bore the unchecked labels. That is to say, they were the ones that contained a solution of blood from the older stains on the knife that Dr. Goodrich had declared to be a murder-weapon.

The physician had used the fluid from the last of his test-bottles. Now he was walking back and forth in the laboratory, his hands clasped behind his back, a thoughtful expression on his face.

"The net result of our experiment," he said presently, "is negative. But that does not mean that it is without value. We have tested for the blood of not merely cats and dogs but a score of other animal tribes. The exclusion of these animals is important, but naturally it is not so satisfactory as positive evidence would be. I must make other tests, but before I can do that, I must get some new test-solutions. That makes it necessary for me to go up to the zoological gardens in Bronx Park," he added.

WHEN Dr. Goodrich returned from the zoological gardens that afternoon, his face gave every evidence of satisfaction with the results of his trip.

He took from his hand-bag a half-dozen small vials, each containing a crimson fluid. He poured part of the fluid from one of the bottles into a small glass tube and placed this in a little bucket of a centrifugal apparatus, which was then whirled rapidly about for several minutes. It was obvious then that the fluid was blood, for the red corpuscles had settled to the bottom and the upper part of the tube now contained a clear, transparent serum. This was drawn into a hypodermic syringe manipulated with dexterity by the examiner himself.

"Let me have a good healthy rabbit that has not been inoculated," Dr. Goodrich then said to a laboratory assistant. A few moments later a rabbit was brought in and inoculated with the clear fluid.

The process was repeated with fluid from each of the other bottles until half a dozen rabbits had been inoculated.

"All that we've done," Dr. Goodrich explained, "is to inoculate each of the rabbits with a different kind of blood—or rather blood-serum. The organism of the rabbit thus inoculated will develop an antidote, so to speak, to that particular type of blood. The principle is that of the development of an antitoxin when an animal is inoculated with virulent germs, for example with the bacillus of diphtheria."

Young Webster, the assistant district attorney, to whom the explanation was made, professed not to see the analogy.

"I don't see the point," he said. "What similarity is there between the blood of an animal and the virulent germs of a disease like diphtheria?"

"There is this similarity," Dr. Goodrich replied: "that both are protein substances, and that all foreign proteins are more or less toxic when introduced into the blood stream. The organism resents their presence, so to speak, and develops so-called antibodies to neutralize them. And such antibodies cannot be developed in any other way known to us. In effect, we use the body of an animal as a laboratory."

"I understand that, so far as the development of diphtheria antitoxin is concerned," said the attorney. "Of course I know, too, that you then bleed the animal and use the serum which contains the antitoxin as a remedy for the treatment of diptheria. But I do not understand what all this has to do with your inoculation of rabbits with the blood specimens you got up there at the zoological gardens."

Dr. Goodrich explained the matter in detail. It was thus, he said, that the fluids were developed by which blood of different kinds could be tested. If, for example, a rabbit is inoculated with cat's blood, the quality antidotal to that particular kind of blood is developed in the rabbit's veins. If, then, some of the rabbit's blood is extracted, it becomes a test-fluid, a drop or two of which inserted into a solution of cat's blood will cause a cloudy precipitate. You can thus demonstrate the presence of cat's blood in solution in a test-tube among hundreds or thousands of test-tubes containing other types of blood.

This, it appears, was the nature of the test which had been made by Dr. Goodrich in the laboratory that morning, in which it had been shown that part of the blood stains on the blade of the murder-weapon were of human origin. The test, as already recorded, failed to demonstrate the nature of other of the blood stains. It was to secure new test-fluids that Dr. Goodrich had made his visit to the zoological gardens. Now it would be necessary to wait a week or ten days before further tests could be conducted.

Dr. Goodrich explained that this so-called precipitin test had not originated with him but had been developed by a distinguished American biologist, Dr. G. H. F. Nuttall, of Cambridge University, England. The test is so delicate that the human or non-human character of blood may be determined from a specimen many years old.

Both physician and lawyer appeared to attach great importance to the tests that were to be made with the fluids about to be developed in the bodies of the rabbits just inoculated.

"If these tests should enable us to trace the user of that knife and bring the murder home to him," said the attorney, "it will be about the most remarkable demonstration of the scientific method in tracing crime that I have ever seen. And I say this," he added, "without prejudice to any of your previous exploits, Dr. Goodrich."

The physician shrugged his shoulders.

"We shall see what we shall see," he said. "I make no promises." He had taken the ugly looking hunting-knife from the table drawer. "We have made a beginning by proving that this is human blood on the blade of the knife," he commented. "We felt pretty sure of that before; but, after all, we were only guessing. When a woman is found stabbed to death in her room, and a blood-stained knife is sticking in a wooden railing, as if it had been thrown from the window of the room, it is a fair enough inference that this knife is the murder-weapon. But 'fair enough' inferences are sometimes misleading; and it is satisfactory to have this particular inference fortified by definite laboratory observations."

"It is, indeed," assented the lawyer. "And now I am eager to see what the new tests will show about the other blood stains.'

"All in good time," said the physician.

FOR a few days more the newspapers continued to feature the "Steamship Murder." Then it was crowded from the front page, except in one or two evening papers that chanced to find a paucity of sensational news. At first, the newspaper accounts had contained all manner of gossip about the young woman who had met so tragic a fate, much speculation as to her identity, a certain amount of innuendo intended to give piquancy to the whole affair; but from first to last there was no mention of the finding of the murder-weapon, the authorities having wisely kept that fact in reserve. But of course this did not prevent imaginative reporters from inventing clues and following them up with the usual hue and cry.

According to one account, the murder was of international significance. It was darkly hinted that matters of vital concern to the new nations on the eastern border of the Adriatic in their relations with Italy were involved, and that the death of the "princess" had been decreed by high authority—hence the official reticence regarding the matter and the utter unlikelihood that the direct perpetrator of the crime would ever be revealed.

Another account suggested a romance of

quite different character—a romance of the heart, in which two Europeans of high station figured as rivals, while a third person of very different status but of great personal charm had gained the ascendency over the more brilliant competitors. All three of the rivals were believed to have been passengers on the ship, and the published innuendos were so shaped as to point impartially at each while concealing the identity of all.

Similar vagueness attached to a third variety of rumor, which connected a wealthy and aristocratic young American with the romance, rumor having it that he had met the mysterious young woman while he was on an official mission to Serbia—or perhaps it was Rumania or Poland—during the war. A matrimonial alliance being impossible in her native country, the young woman had virtually eloped with her admirer, intending to keep the affair secret until matters could be adjusted on a conventional legal basis in America. The account, of course, had sufficient flexibility to apply with equal force, or lack of force, to a dozen or so young Americans who were known to be passengers on the ship.

ALL this, of course, was quite unofficial. Meantime, the authorities of sundry departments of justice, Federal and local, had not been idle. In a sense, every person on the ship was under suspicion; and at least a score of passengers were carefully questioned before landing, and several of them were subsequently kept under official surveillance. A number of steerage passengers and several sailors, including the one who found the knife, were detained at Ellis Island on one pretext or another.

The first- and second-cabin passengers were all allowed to land ultimately; but it was understood that a number of these, including all who had made the personal acquaintance of the murdered woman, were to hold themselves in readiness to be called as witnesses in case certain eventualities, vaguely hinted at, should develop.

Notwithstanding all this unofficial and official semblance of activity, however, the bald fact of the matter was that no clue whatsoever had been discovered which tended to implicate any known individual, directly or indirectly, in the murder of Signora Cerino. Webster made free admission as to this when I chanced to talk with him about the matter, a week or so after the preliminary test-tube examinations already recorded. Not only this, but he dismissed all the newspaper rumors with a laugh, explaining that the alleged "princess" was in reality an American girl who had married an Italian of more or less doubtful lineage, subsequently leaving him for good and sufficient cause, and that there was no reason to suppose that she had any official or diplomatic affiliations whatsoever. She was heiress to an American fortune, however, and was known to have had with her a considerable sum of money and a collection of jewels of great value. This obviously suggested that robbery, rather than any obscure or romantic cause, might have been the motive for the murder.

"But what about these blood-clues Dr. Goodrich is following?" I asked. "What conceivable connection can there be, for example, between animals in the zoological garden and a murder committed in mid-ocean?"

The attorney laughed.

"There is no connection," he asserted, "that any one but Dr. Goodrich would ever have suspected. And, for that matter, of course there is no actual connection between these animals and the crime or the man who committed it—except an indirect association as part of a figment of Goodrich's brilliant synthesizing imagination."

"That is beautifully vague," I said. "But Dr. Goodrich himself appears to think well of his experiment, and he usually does not spend much time blowing bubbles."

"Precisely so," assented the attorney. "Goodrich has sheer genius for that sort of thing. I heard a story the other day of a colored woman who remarked to a friend, 'Do you know I never *thought* to *think* of that before.' Well, Goodrich's synthetic imagination reminds me of that remark. Many a time he has 'thought to think' of something that would have occurred to no one else in the world. And this is a case in point. I put into his hands the murder-weapon, stained with blood. I wanted to make sure that it was human blood—that is to say, that this really was the murder-weapon. Well, as you know, Goodrich made tests that answered that question. But he did not stop at that. He found some other stains on the knife, and proved with the microscope that these also were blood stains of much less recent origin. Then it occurred to him to find out by laboratory tests what kind of blood this might be."

"I knew about all that," I assented. "But I am utterly in the dark as to what he hopes to prove with the aid of that blood, or how the identification of the species of animal from which the blood came can be of service in helping to discover the murderer."

Again the attorney laughed.

"That," he said, "is Goodrich's secret. I know as little about it as you do. Goodrich himself tells me that nothing whatever may come of it. At the outset, he spoke of it as a 'hundred-to-one shot.' But I notice that he appears to think that the new tests he will make with the serum he is now developing are very much more important than the earlier ones. In fact, he said to me the other day, 'I think now the chances are as good as one to five.' "

"Coming from Dr. Goodrich," I said, "such a statement suggests to me at least an even chance that something important is about to develop."

"I agree with you fully," assented the lawyer. "We all understand that Goodrich's judgment in certain matters is never to be taken lightly. So we are awaiting with genuine expectancy the conclusion of his laboratory test, to be completed with the aid of the inoculated rabbits."

IN DUE course, the rabbits, each of which had been subjected to successive inoculations, were bled (quite painlessly and without injury or permanent inconvenience to themselves) and a small quantitiy of serum of different types thus secured with which to complete the test-tube experiments.

Dr. Goodrich now proceeded as in the earlier experiment. With a pipette he inserted a few drops of first one of the new test-serums and then another into each of several tubes containing the solution of blood from the older stains on the murder weapon.

As one test-fluid after another was used and the solution in the test-tubes remained perfectly clear, the physician's face and manner evidenced no emotion whatsoever. He viewed the tubes carefully, but with the appearance of only casual interest. Then, with a few decisive pencil strokes, he made record of the negative results.

But now, as he took up the last bottle, his face wore an expression of keener interest. He was sitting more erect, and there was added alertness in his manner. But his movements had the deliberateness and precision of the trained laboratory worker as he leaned forward and placed a few drops of the test-fluid in one tube after another. He replaced the bottle on the table, and sat with chin resting in the palm of his left hand, while in his right hand he held a pencil, as if prepared to make a record. His eyes were fixed intently on the test-tubes.

Presently a little smile played about his mouth, and his head, still supported by the hand, moved slightly up and down as if in assent to a mental comment.

He was noting that the fluid in the test-tubes was no longer transparent. Little clouds of white opacity were forming and spreading into the depths of the liquid as the drops of test-serum percolated into the test-tube fluid.

Dr. Goodrich put the pencil to paper and wrote,

"A pronounced positive reaction, beginning in forty-five seconds."

For two or three moments more he sat there and watched the test-tubes with obvious satisfaction. Then he got up and went over to a desk at the side of the laboratory and took up a paper that appeared to show a printed list of names and addresses. It was a list with which he was apparently already familiar, for he turned quickly to the second page and put a pencil-check against a name near the foot of the page. He copied the name and address on a card, and put the card in his pocket. Then, still smiling and nodding his head approvingly, he took off the telephone receiver.

About two hours later, three men, two of them detectives in plain clothes, were standing at the door of a suite of apartments on the tenth floor of the Hotel Admiral. In response to their ring, the door was opened by a middle-aged man of aristocratic bearing, who regarded them with an air of surprise.

"You have perhaps mistaken the room," he said, with urbanity.

"No; I think not," replied Webster, the assistant district attorney, who stepped quickly through the doorway as he spoke. "This is Mr. James Rollin, is it not?"

The other nodded his head in assent, and now there was a momentary suggestion of suspicion, perhaps of fear, in his eyes.

"At your service," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I have a warrant for your arrest," Webster said, "on the charge of murder."

The accused man gave an exclamation of apparent astonishment which to Webster did not seem altogether spontaneous or genuine. He followed it up with protestations, denials and bluster. But Webster noticed that he did not at first ask anything about the nature of the crime with which he was charged. The lawyer regarded that as a suspicious circumstance.

"I am not here to waste time in talking," Webster informed him rather curtly. "You are under arrest, as I told you, and we are about to make a search through your belongings. In the first place, let me see your identification papers."

The accused man, still maintaining an attitude of defiance, brought out a long purse. Webster took this and inspected it with interest.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I suspected as much. How do you account for having this purse in your possession?"

The man spoke up eagerly.

"How do I account for it? How would I account for it? It happens to be made of the skin of an animal I shot. It is a souvenir of a hunting-trip."

Webster's smile must have seemed puzzling. In point of fact, he had received just the answer he was looking for. Up to that moment, as he afterward admitted, he had felt himself somewhat in the position of the man who, with a rather doubtful hand, is bluffing at poker. But the sight of the purse and the statement regarding it assured him absolutely. And when, a moment later, he opened the purse and glanced at the numbers on some English bank-notes that he found there, he knew that he held a winning hand, for the bank-notes bore numbers that were on notes of the same denomination known (through cable communications) to have been in the possession of Signora Cerino, the murdered woman, when she left Italy.

Webster promptly called the attention of the accused man to the fact, and the effect of the statement was obvious. The man kept up an appearance of bravado, but it was clear that his courage was oozing. When, a little later, a string of pearls, two rings and a diamond brooch, answering to the description of jewels that the murdered woman had declared and had appraised by the American consul at Naples before sailing, were found in a pocket of one of Rollin's bags, the man apparently realized that his case was hopeless.

Regardless of any admissions or denials on the part of the accused man, however, the evidence against him was now conclusive. He was lodged in the Tombs, and subsequently taken back to Italy for trial, his crime having been committed on the high seas, on board a steamer sailing under the Italian flag. An Italian court ultimately found him guilty of murder in the first degree, and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

OF COURSE the newspapers had apparently full accounts of the apprehension of the murderer. Various fictitious explanations were given of the way in which the detectives got on the track of the culprit.

It was said, for example, that Rollin had been from the very first day of the voyage much in company with the woman who was to be his victim, and that suspicion turned toward him on that account. But in reality neither this nor any other of the suggested explanations had any validity whatever.

In point of fact, the murderer was not among those who had associated with Signora Cerino. It was the unanimous statement of a dozen men or so who had been interviewed in the matter that this man had never been seen even to speak to the young woman. There was nothing to make one believe that he had made her acquaintance, and it is probable that he had purposely refrained from so doing.

There was no reason whatever to single him out from among upward of four hundred passengers on the ship until the evidence furnished by Dr. Goodrich's test-tubes gave the clue.

"And what was the import of that scientific evidence?" I eagerly asked Webster, when he told me the story of the apprehension of the murderer.

"Just one of Goodrich's inspirations," the lawyer replied. "The murder-weapon was obviously a hunting-knife. Doubtless the old stains were from the blood of some animal hunted by the owner of the knife. If the blood proved to be that of, let us say, deer or rabbit or bear, the clue would be of little value, as these animals exist in all countries. Doubtless there were many men on the ship who had hunted these and other common animals. But when tests for such blood proved negative, and it was shown that no tribe of animals of the Northern Hemisphere was involved, Dr. Goodrich felt that he was getting on a warm scent. It was then that he told me he thought the chance was as good as one to five."

"I recall that he seemed rather confident," I assented.

"That sort of opportunity always intrigues him, as you know. You recall that he went to the zoological garden, and with the cooperation of the authorities there secured blood specimens from a number of less familiar animals, in particular those from the Southern Hemisphere.

"You are familiar with the use he made of these specimens; but what you perhaps do not know is that the final test that gave the positive reaction was made with the serum developed by inoculating a rabbit with the blood of the kangaroo."

"Was it, indeed?" I exclaimed. "That certainly is interesting."

"Both interesting and significant," assented the attorney. "It proved that the hunting-knife that had recently been used as a murder-weapon belonged to some one who had hunted in Australia, for, of course, kangaroos are not found elsewhere. And it happened that on the entire passenger list of the ship there was the name of one man, and one only, hailing from Australia. So Dr. Goodrich's necromantic test-tubes virtually revealed to him the name of the murderer. The case was clinched when I found Rollin carrying a purse made of kangaroo skin. About as pretty a demonstration of the value of scientific method as you could ask, is it not?"

"I don't know how anything could be much neater," I assented. "In one sense, it is simple when explained, but it has all the effect of clairvoyant vision."

"That description does the necromancy of the test-tubes scant justice," declared the attorney. "Goodrich himself says it was just luck," he added, "but I contend that 'luck' of that kind is equivalent to genius."

The next exploit of Dr. Goodrich, the new scientific detective, is related in "The Magic Wheel"—see February EVERYBODY's, out January 14th. Here he has to cope with a phase of criminal activity quite out of his usual line, but his methods and results are the more interesting and marvelous for all that.

New Year's Eve

By Theodosia Garrison

SAY that one year of all our many years
  Might enter through Time's opened door this night,
That year we hold the loveliest of its peers,
  With never grief to rend nor dread to blight—
  Ours to relive, if so we will, aright,
The months remembered without loss or tears;
  Say we might choose, twixt chime and candle-light,
This—or the new year, veiled with many fears.

I think that we would choose, as men before
  Have turned from certainty to perilous things,
    The unmarked road, the peak beyond our view.
Still would our hearts adventure that strange shore
  That offers shipwreck—or the wealth of kings:
    The Unknown—the Uncertain—and the New.

Ryan's Decision

Confronted by Tony, His Hand-Organ, a Leetle Boy, a Black-and-White Pup and a Brute of a Man—Now, What Could the Officer Do?

By Franklyn Barrows

TONY BIANDA, son of Italy, pushed his cart with its hand-organ to the curb and stopped to mop a perspiring brow. There remained two full hours before he would turn homeward, for the sun was yet high and hot. It had been a good day; his coat pocket sagged with the weight of pennies and nickels tossed upon the blistering cobblestones at his feet in appreciation of the melody that leaped forth as he turned the handle.

The weight in the pocket roused Tony to pleasant thoughts. He was prospering. There was money in the bank in his name. In two days it would be four years exactly since his foot first touched soil in this land of the free. He would celebrate that day. He would buy Rosa a fine American-lady dress he had seen marked at six dollars; and together with Tony, junior they would celebrate in true American style by going to the movies. Sure!

With a light heart he turned the handle. As the strains of a popular tune issued from the organ, he cast a professional eye upon the rows of windows in the apartment-house before him. It looked promising; already one, two, four windows were inhabited.

Long practise had schooled Tony to tell almost at a glance what his prospects were after the first two tunes. The tall man at the curb, for instance, with the polished shoes and deep scowl—he had no pennies for Tony. He was too much-a mean-looking. Sure! But the leetle boy close by with the small black-and-white pup on a string—ah, he like Tony's music! Already he have the penny ready for Tony. "Thanks boy, much-a 'blige. Nice, fine dog. Yes?"

Tony's eyes wandered slightly from business as he regarded the pup, at that moment investigating a fly on the polished shoe of the tall, scowling man. The pup cocked up first one ear, then the other as it sniffed at the fly. Suddenly it crouched, head between puppy paws, and sprang toward its prey. The fly flew away, possibly to live another day; the pup's tongue slid along the polished shoe, leaving a dull streak to mark its course. "A leetle slow," Tony thought as he smiled. "Some day maybe you do better."

The tall man noted the damage and the cause. His leg swung backward, then forward, aimed at the pup. Tony saw the kick—right in the pup's stomach. He saw the pup gasping on the cobblestones, the boy kneeling at its side, crying. The tall man started to move away, unnoticed.

Tony stopped turning the handle. The blood of his forefathers leaped up within him and cried—shrieked—to avenge the wrong at his feet. Was it possible in this land of the free that a man could do such a thing and walk off just-a like-a that! Cristoforo Colombo! No!

In two jumps he reached the tall man's side. His fist flew up. The tall man fell to the sidewalk. Tony stood over him, like the gladiator in the days of his forefathers. The pup—the boy—ah, they were avenged! Tony Bianda had avenged the wrong. Justice had triumphed!

The tall man with the fast-swelling eye rose slowly to his feet and looked dazedly about for the hand-organ man.

But Tony had left the scene; already his cart was rattling up a convenient alley, urged on at topmost speed by its excited, perspiring owner. Up alleys, down streets, in zigzag fashion, he retreated, always in a general homeward direction.

Presently Tony's feet began to lag. He was tired and hot; he would stop for a breath and mop his brow. The city jail, looming near by, caught his eye. Instantly into his laggard feet sprang fresh energy; again they flew over the cobblestones. Tony did not like those frowning gray walls with the grated windows. Often with the push-cart he passed them; always they chilled him to the heart. Now he viewed them with terror. For had he not broken a law? Might not Mr. Policemans even now be close upon him? Tony did not gaze backward to check up on this torturing thought. Instead, he urged his lagging legs on to greater effort.

Not until the cart reached the safety of the little wood-shed in which it was nightly housed did Tony pause. "Tony never push you so fast before, maybe," he panted, addressing the cart. "Maybe now you think Tony is what you call the speed-a bug."

In the cool of the shed he sat until the outward effects of the hasty retreat were no longer visible. Then, with a song upon his lips, he opened the kitchen door; it would not do for Rosa to know he was troubled.

"Why, Tony!" Rosa exclaimed. "How you home so early? Are you seek?"

Tony shrugged a shoulder, rolled his eyes upward and sighed, "Ah, Tony get so lonesome for Rosa he just-a hadda come home."

Rosa patted his cheek. "Tony always say something pretty to Rosa," she said.

"Sure! Why not? Everything is all-a right. Look-a dis!" And he spilled upon the table the pocketful of pennies and nickels.

Rosa clapped her hands, and Tony laughed triumphantly.

After supper Tony reached for the accordion. Always in the evening he played the accordion. And Tony, junior danced to the music—and sometimes Rosa. But this evening the music was not bright and gay; n could not dance to it, for Tony's spirits oped as his thoughts reverted to the e of his lawbreaking. Thus the music grew sadder and sadder in harmony with his melancholy mood. Finally he began a dirge.

"Please, Tony," Rosa pleaded. "You give me the shiver."

That night Tony dreamed he was looking out through a barred window within those frowning gray walls.

"Why you look so sad, Tony?" Rosa asked during breakfast.

"It make-a me sad," Tony replied, "to think that-a all day I will be so far from Rosa."

And Rosa laughed and patted his cheek.

Tony laughed, too, and tried to push away the cloud that hung over his head. That day he guided the cart into new territory, far from the scene of yesterday's downfall. He played gay tunes; he whistled; he laughed as the children danced.

Late in the afternoon, having circled about into his regular territory, Tony entered a store and purchased the fine American-lady dress for Rosa and a cap and toy balloon for Tony, junior. These he stowed with care beside the organ. Then the cart began to rattle homeward over the cobblestones.

His spirits rose as he drew nearer and nearer his familiar neighborhood. Soon he would be home. He would wait until after supper before giving Rosa the dress. He would hand it to her carelessly and say, "Rosa, here's a piece-a fish for Friday." He laughed at the surprise he knew would be hers upon opening the package. Then he would tell her of their beeg-a celebration for the coming day. Sure! And after that he would reach for the accordion; and——

Suddenly Tony became aware that some one was shouting at him. He glanced toward the sidewalk. There on the curb, beckoning to him, stood Mr. Policemans! Behind him stood the tall man of yesterday; only, to-day one of his eyes was black and swollen. Santa Maria!

With sinking heart Tony pushed the cart to the curb and tipped his cap to Mr. Policemans.

"What's this I hear about you blacking this man's eye?" thundered Officer Ryan, scowling down at Tony.

Tony shrugged a shoulder and smiled up at the towering arm of the law.

"Please, Mr. Policemans, I tell you just-a how it is," pleaded Tony. "The leetle boy with curly hair he stood by dis-a man. In the leetle boy's hand he had piece-a string tied to a small black-and-white pup. It was a nice-a, fine leetle pup, just-a so beeg-a as a pocketful. Before Tony know it dis-a beeg-a stiff"—meaning the tall man—"kick the leetle pup in the stummick out in the street. And the leetle boy cry by the pup like-a his heart go break. So Tony hit dis-a beeg-a stiff with his fist. Sure!"

"Aw, g'wan, you greasy wop!" sneered the tall man. "I didn't kick the dog. It was jumping and snapping at me. I just pushed it away."

"Push!" Tony exclaimed excitedly. "Push! Cristoforo Colombo! He push like-a dis"—and Tony described a kick of such robust nature that he partially lost his balance. "That-a way he push!"

Officer Ryan stroked his chin reflectively.

A patron of a pool-hall hard by paused to admire the tall man's black eye.

"It sure is a beaut," he murmured.

"Move on," warned Officer Ryan; "I'll have no crowd."

Tony looked up. He had an idea.

"Please, I let-a dis-a man give me a black eyes. Then it'll be all-a right; he will be satisfy, maybe."

"That will be all from you," said Officer Ryan conclusively.

"Sure," Tony replied obediently.

Officer Ryan turned to the tall man.

"You've got an awful crust," he said, "kicking a pup dog that way. It's breaking the humane law that you are doing. You could get thirty days, and it's me that would glory to see you get it. Let this be a lesson to you. And remember, never kick a dumb animal unless it kicks you first. Do you get that? All right. Now be on your way before I change my decision."

When they were alone, Officer Ryan scowled down upon Tony.

"Sure this is a pretty mess you're in," he said. "What do you mean by swatting a man in the eye like that? I've a notion to run you in, and your organ, too."

Tony thumbed his cap and trembled. Those frowning gray walls grew suddenly near. His dream—alas, it was coming true! Poor Rosa! She starve before Tony get out, maybe. And Tony, junior! What will become——

"Please, Mr. Policemans, let-a me tell you somethings," he pleaded.

"Make it snappy," Officer Ryan admonished," for I'm about to close this case."

"Sure! All-a right, boss. Listen," Tony began. "When I was a leetle boy in Italy I own a nice-a, beeg-a dog, so high. It wag his tail and follow Tony all over. It was Tony's good friend. Tony love his dog. One day Tony go fishin' on the bridge. The dog he's there, too. Byme-by Tony fall in and go splash, like-a dat. It look like-a Tony go drown'd; he can no swim. Everythings get black in his eyes; the water close over him. Then Tony go to sleep. Byme-by, when Tony opens his eyes, he is layin' on the bank. The dog he's standin' over him, soakin' wet, lickin' Tony's face and whinin'. The dog save Tony's life. Dat is all, boss, only dis: Ever since then, Tony loves a dog. No one can kick a dog when Tony is around. Naw, sir. Every time Tony black his eye. Sure!"

Officer Ryan cast a judicial eye upon Tony.

"It's disorderly conduct that you're charged with," he said in grave tones. "And you plead guilty by your own testimony. You deliberately break a law and then tell me so to my face. You smash a guy in the lamp and tell the law you're glad you did it. I could run you in and raffle your organ. But I'll give you one more chance. Only, don't let it happen again—on me beat. Now be off, you miserable garlic-eating, song-singing, organ-twisting son of a banana-peel—and here's a good cigar for you."

Soon the cart was rattling over the pavement toward Rosa, propelled by the jubilant Tony. His cap was pushed back over his curly hair and in his mouth perched a black cigar.

"That-a one fine boss. He give-a Tony nice-a cigar for lickin' dat-a beeg-a stiff. He like-a dogs too, maybe, yes. It's one grand country. Cristoforo Colombo!"

At the corner, Officer Ryan met Sergeant Clancy.

"How are you this day?" asked the sergeant.

"Not so good," Officer Ryan replied. "I missed me sleep last night. A guy kicked my boy's pup in the stummick yesterday, and it seemed to hurt the kid as much as the pup. I was up half the night playing nurse to the pair."

"A guy that'd kick a kid's pup like that ought to get a black eye."

"He's got it," Officer Ryan replied knowingly; "and, as the fellow said, it's a beaut."

A Novel of Love, Mysticism, Adventure

SACRIFICE

Lilla Makes a Strange and Thrilling Pilgrimage to Africa to Find Lawrence Teck—Concluding Instalment

By Stephen French Whitman

Illustration by E. Hopper

LILLA crossed the Atlantic, traveled swiftly from Cherbourg to Marseilles, embarked on a ship that steamed through the Mediterranean toward the Orient. At last she saw Port Said, Suez, and the red-and-purple lava islands of the Red Sea, splendid in a sunset of extravagant hues.

The heat was intense.

But the ship emerged from the Gulf of Aden into a still greater heat; and suddenly the air was saturated with moisture. The walls and the ceiling of her cabin were covered with drops of water; exposed objects were defaced by rust and mildew overnight; while the human body seemed to be deliquescing in a torrid steam. A sickly breeze, filled with the odors of a strange world, hardly rippled the languid sea.

On the right, beyond a heat-mist through which flying-fish were darting, loomed a new coast-line. Yellow beaches appeared, interrupted by lagoons where the slow waves abruptly sprouted high into the air—white geysers against somber forests and jungles. From these dark-green fastnesses ascending threads of smoke inveigled the gaze far upward into space, to where, above a belt of hazy blue that one had taken for the sky, mountain-peaks revealed them[illegible]s, unrelated to the earth, and half [illegible]ved, like a mirage.

[illegible]ght fell. The velvety blackness of the [illegible]ns was powdered with star-dust; in the wash of the ship there gleamed a profound phosphorescence, as from a decaying ocean. The coast hung like a mass of inky vapor above the fitful gleaming of the surf, from which was wafted a faint, interminable booming that suggested the roaring of lions and the thunder of savage drums.

Lilla emerged from her cabin, crossed the deck, and laid her hands upon the softly quivering rail. Close beside her the darkness gave up a ghost—Hamoud, who also stood silent, gazing toward the coast.

"Africa, madam," he uttered at last, in a voice that lost itself in the clinging darkness and the smothering heat.

And soon a languid ecstasy stole over him.

His heart swelled as he drank in, at the same time, the exhalations of his native land and the faint fragrance of her hair. In the darkness he perceived with his mind's eye both her beauty and the well-remembered beauties of the spice-isles. The palm-crowned hills encircled the lapis-lazuli harbor of Zanzibar, on whose waters he saw himself sailing, with this mortal treasure, in a handsome dhow, the tasseled prow shaped like the head of the she camel sent from heaven to the Thamud tribesmen, the mast fluttering the pennants of ancient sultans. Then the dhow with the camel-prow became a panoplied camel, on which he and she were being borne away to Omân, the land of his fathers, which he had never seen. There, in those rugged mountains, he would become as his ancestors had been—vigorous of will, fierce and great, triumphant in war and love.

For a long while he stood there, trembling gently in unison with the ship, thought linking itself to thought, and image to image, his fancies growing ever more bizarre yet ever more distinct, as though he were inhaling, instead of the faint perfume of her hair, the smoke of hashish.

But she had forgotten him.

In the thick sunshine, below the cloudlike mountains, sand-banks unrolled themselves between the mouths of the equatorial rivers flanked by mangrove forests. At last, in the depths of a bay of glittering brownish water, the port town appeared, a mass of red-tiled roofs spread along the gray sea-wall that suggested a fortress.

Through sandy thoroughfares bordered with acacia trees rode hollow-eyed Europeans in little cars, which half-naked negroes pushed along a narrow-gage railway. The languor of those recumbent figures was abruptly disturbed at the apparition of a woman clad in snowy linen, who advanced between a tall young Zanzibar Arab and a small, limping white man with the step of a convalescent, but with eyes that were filled with an extraordinary resolution. That evening, at the club-house, one brought word to the rest that she was Lawrence Teck's wife.

There was a chorus of profane surprise in half a dozen tongues; for this was the end of March, the climax of the rainy summer, when the land was full of rotting vegetation and mephitic vapors, of mosquitoes and tsetse flies, malaria and fever.

"Is he coming out, then?" said one. "Where is he this time, by the way?" "All the same," another remarked, "I'll wager that he isn't aware of this. A reconciliation by surprise!"

"She looks ill already. She'll last in this place about as long as an orchid in a stew-pan."

"But, my friend, she wants to go in after him, it seems. She's with the governor now."

AT THAT moment, indeed, the governor was patiently repeating his remonstrances to Lilla.

They sat in a large white room with shuttered windows, beneath a punka that kept churning up the dead air, beside a carved table on which stood a tray of untouched coffee-cups. The governor was a studious, sick-looking gentleman with a *pince-nez* over his jaundiced eyes, and with long mustaches frizzed out before his ears. He wore a white-duck uniform adorned with gilt shoulder-straps, an aiguillette, and a bar of service-ribbons brilliantly plaided and striped. Anemic from malaria and harassed by fever, he showed while talking to Lilla a look of exhaustion and pain. Now and again, after puffing his cigaret, he gave a feeble cough and rolled up his eyes. Then, in monotonous, dull tones, he began once more to express his objections.

Mr. Teck had gone in from a northern port a month ago. He had passed by Fort Pero d'Anhaya, telling the commandant there that he was bound back toward the region in which his principals might presently seek a concession. He was therefore, no doubt, at present in the gorges beyond the forests of the Mambava. He had with him a strong *safari* and a gentleman friend.

"What friend?" asked Lilla.

"What friend? I don't remember. But I can, of course, find out."

"It's not worth while. All that I want is——"

The governor raised his hand, which trembled visibly. "Pray let me finish, madam. Mr. Teck is in a very dangerous place. We have never conquered the Mambava; they are a ferocious people, and the man who enters their country does so at his own risk. Had it not been that Mr. Teck's venture, because of his peculiar relationship to King Muene-Motapa, might end in winning over the Mambava to peaceful labor and trade, we should never have given permission. As for you, madam, such a journey is not to be thought of. I say nothing about the climate at this season. But, if you will pardon me, as I look at you the idea of your traveling inland on *safari* at any time of year— In fact, I ask myself—" He stared round him at the mildewed white walls and explained, "I ask myself, indeed, if you are real."

For even in her white *terai* and belted suit of white linen she was a vision appropriate only to the far-off world that this man had left behind him at the call of duty —a world of delicate living and subtle sensations, of frail flesh in luxurious settings, of sophistication that would have shrunk from every crudity, and exquisiteness that would have shriveled at the touch of hardship. This studious-looking, fever-stricken soldier, a nobleman under a bygone régime and, in his youth, a great amateur of love, had known well many women of whom this suppliant was the virtual counterpart, fragile, complex, too sensitive, too ardent, the predestined prey of impulses and disabilities that none but themselves, their adorers and specialists in neurasthenia could conceive of. In the present woman he discerned the same lovely and neurotic countenance, the same traces of mingled fastidiousness and desperation, the same promises of exceptionally passionate and tragic happenings.

"Ah, yes," he reflected, coughing feebly, so as not to make his head ache; "ah, yes; she is fatal. Twenty years ago I would have killed men for her with pleasure," he told himself, watching her pale golden face. "Fatal!"—but he did not ask himself what fatality had brought her here. He knew her story, as by this time every one knew it who had ever heard of Lawrence Teck or David Verne or her.

"So it is this one that she really loves," he thought, contemplating rather dismally her bitten lips, her lowered eyelashes, the throb of her throat, the working of her slim fingers. "I know, I know; now she must find him quickly, quickly, quickly. She cannot sleep; she cannot eat, but she can drink, because she is always burning; and she can think, yes—but one thought only. Ah, the lucky man!"

As though she had read his mind, or at least had discerned his capacity for understanding her, she leaned forward, laid her hand on his sleeve and murmured:

"You have told me why I must not go. Now give me permission."

"Do you, then, wish to risk death just at this time? I should have thought—" He shook his head. "No; I will telegraph to Fort Pero d'Anhaya. The commandant there will send messengers to the border of the Mambava country; the Mambava will telephone your message through their forests by drum-beat, and in one night every village will have the news. They will find him and tell him, and he will come here ou."

oo much time has passed already. now I may be too late. Besides, he not come to me; it's I who must go to him." She blurted out in a soft, strange voice, "On my knees, all the way—" She recovered herself; but two tears suddenly rolled down her cheeks, and she faltered, "Look here; you know, if you prevent me you'll be doing a terrible thing."

He got up to pace the floor. He was of short stature, and his shoulders were rounded by desk-work and the debility from the tropics; yet in the lost paradise of youth fair women had shed tears before him and made him wax in their hands. He came back to the table, absent-mindedly drank a cup of the tepid coffee and said indignantly,

"Nevertheless, you look far from well at this moment."

"I have never been so strong," she retorted.

"She dares everything, and no doubt all the while she fears terribly what she dares. She is sublime! Who am I, a lump of sick flesh in this fever-trap, to interfere so strictly with this thing of white flame?"

He said to her: "Listen. I will give you permission to travel on *safari* as far as Fort Pero d'Anhaya. Beyond that point I cannot promise you protection; so beyond you are not to go. Mr. Teck must come to you there. To-morrow I will see these people of yours, to make sure that they are competent men, able to take all possible precautions for your welfare. Now then, tell me at least that I am not as cruel and as stupid as you thought."

When she had gone, a young man in a white uniform entered with a sheaf of papers. The governor smothered a groan.

"The summary of the hut tax, Excellency. The post-office reports for last month. The reports of new public works. The new bridge at Maquival has been finished."

"Ah," said the governor profoundly, staring into space, "the new bridge of Maquival has been finished!"

THE equatorial wilds spread before the *safari* its wealth of extravagant hues and forms, all its perfidies veiled for the allurement of mortals who would trust nature in her richest manifestations. The sun shone on a rain-drenched world; the earth steamed; and through a mist like that which prefaced the second Biblical version of creation, the splendor of the jungle seemed to be taking shape for the first time, at the command of a power for whom beauty was synonymous with peril.

Nevertheless, the *safari* men were singing. *Askaris* led the way, Somalis in claret-colored fezzes and khaki uniforms, bare-legged with bandoleers across their chests and rifles over their shoulders. Their small, dark faces were sharp and fierce; they marched with the swing of desert men; their glances expressed their pride, their contempt for the humble, melodious horde that followed after them.

Four negroes, naked to the waist, supported a *machilla*, a canopied hammock of white duck that swung from a bamboo pole. They were Wasena, specially trained for this fatiguing work, maintaining a smooth step over the roughest ground. Lilla reclined in the hammock Her face, half concealed by the fringe of the awning, appeared opalescent in the filtered sunlight. Her tapering figure had the grace of Persian queens and Roman empresses floating along in their litters on ripples of dusky muscles.

So this delicate white product of modernity, this embodiment of civilization's perceptions and all that it pays for them, was borne at last into the primordial world on the shoulders of savages.

Behind her streamed a hundred porters, balancing on their heads the personal baggage, rolled tents, chop-boxes, sacks of *safari* food. They were men from Manica, Sofala, and Tete, some of pure strain, others with Arab and Latin blood in their veins. Their bare torsoes were the color of chocolate, of ebony, or even of saddle-leather; but all their foreheads bulged out in the same way, all their noses were short and flat, all their chins receded. On their breasts and arms were charms of crocodiles' teeth and leopards' claws, to keep them safe from beasts, rheumatism, arrows, pneumonia, snake-bite and skin-diseases. In the distended lobes of their ears were stuffed cigarets, horn snuff-boxes, or flowers from the port town

They were followe by the camp servants in long white robes, Beira-boys and Swahilis, driving before them a little flock of sheep. Parr, at the head of another squad of *askaris*, brought up the rear, riding a Muscat donkey. He raised his head, and his withered mouth, emerging from the shadow of his helmet, showed a melancholy smile.

He was drinking in the smell of Africa, and listening to the song of the *safari*.

At times the song died down into a hum. But soon a quavering falsetto was heard formulating a new *motif*, expressing a new thought. Other voices joined the leader's; a minor refrain swept up and down the line, and abruptly the climax swelled out in a diapason descending far into the bass. So that every one could sing, the improvisor had phrased his thoughts in Swahili, the intertribal language of Africa. He sang of the *bibi* from afar, her skin like a bowl of milk, who was traveling as a bride to Fort Pero d'Anhaya.

"She is rich. She is the daughter of a sultan. She is ill, but she will be well. She is sad, but she will be happy. We shall eat much meat at her wedding."

The deep chorus rolled out to a banging of sticks on the sides of the balanced boxes:

"Wah! This *bibi* is rich! We shall eat much meat at her wedding!"

"They sing of you," said Hamoud, turning his limpid eyes toward her face which was veiled by the swaying fringes of the awning. She unclenched her fists; her body slowly relaxed, and a look of incredulity appeared in her eyes as she returned from afar to this oscillating world of steamy heat, throbbing with aboriginal song, impregnated with the smell of putrefying foliage and of sweat. From under the feet of the *machilla*-carriers a cloud of mauve butterflies rose like flowers to strew themselves over her soft body. It was as if the *machilla* had suddenly become a bier.

"God forbid it!" Hamoud muttered, averting his face from that sign.

He wore a tight turban of many-colored stripes cocked up over one ear; he had bared his legs and bound sandals on his small feet, and round his waist, over the sash that held his dagger, he had fastened a web belt sustaining a holstered pistol. He never left the side of the moving *machilla*.

THEY put behind them the mangroves of the coast. They passed through brakes of white-tipped, feathery reeds, beyond which expanded forests whose velvety foliage was mingled with gray curtains of moss. On their left a little river kept reappearing. From the islands of marsh-grass that floated down the stream, egrets and kingfishers flew away. On sand-bars some dingy, loglike shapes, beginning stealthily to move toward the water, were revealed as crocodiles.

They camped on the clean white sand beside the stream.

The luxury that had always been her atmosphere still clung round her here, taking on an Oriental quality from this host of unfettered slaves, these dusky armed guards, these scurrying, white-robed servants who, in the light of the sunset, composed with the speed of enchantment her habitation for the night. The green tent, its fly extended like an awning, awaited her entrance. The floor-sheet was strewn with rugs from the Ziban; the snowy camp-bed was made; her toilet-case stood open on the folding table, and the tent-boys, their faces obsequiously lowered, were pouring hot water into the canvas tub.

Bareheaded, but wrapped in a tan polo-coat, she emerged from the tent to find the dinner-table ready under the fly. They offered *hors d'œuvres*, a jellied soup, a curry, fruit tarts and coffee. She shook her head, and continued to stare at the candles on the table. Fluffy white moths were burning themselves in the flames.

Parr protested that she must eat. In this climate one did not fast with impunity.

"I sha'n't collapse," she replied, that stony look returning to her face.

NIGHT fell like the abruptly loosened folds of a curtain. The air was vibrant with the shrilling of insects. Fireflies filled the darkness with a twinkling mist, so that the immense spangle of the purple sky seemed to have invaded the purple ambiguities of earth. But along the river-bank shone the fires of the *safari*—points of flame that outlined, like a binding of copper wire, the silhouettes of squatting men, or turned a half-inchoate face to molten bronze, or illuminated, against the lustrous blackness of the river, the fragment of a muscular back, the crook of an arm, a st e of eyeballs, a display of teeth that ed to be swimming there unrelated to d.

e babble of the camp, a continuous chattering, crooning and guffawing, blended with the indignant cries of monkeys. It was, she thought, all one threnody of purely natural creatures, of which one species, by some accident of structure and unplanned immunity, had enlarged its powers of imitation and experiment to this point of triumph—the kindling of fires, the eating of cooked food, the gradually enhanced capacity for suffering. And when she had considered the wide, the pitiably narrow gulf between those monkeys and these simian human beings, she contemplated the gulf between the negroes and herself, just as wide, just as narrow, just as crushing in its implications.

"Are you religious, Parr?" she asked the little man who sat huddled in a faded ulster, sucking at a cold pipe. What she meant was, "Do you believe, poor traveler, that you have a soul—some spark that these black savages share with you perhaps, but that those chattering monkeys lack?"

His pinched gray countenance took on a timid look.

"I hope so, ma'am," he stammered, and tried to assume an expression of befitting dignity.

"So you can pray without laughing at yourself?"

Her cold voice was replete with the bitterness of those who have got from suffering nothing except rancor, as if at some vast hoax.

Parr was frightened by this glimpse into her disillusionment; and prayer, which he himself had abandoned in his childhood, seemed suddenly worthy of his timid championship. He mumbled something about faith; he had, it appeared, seen some of its achievements. He recalled the faith of strong men, which had accomplished prodigies, the confidence of youth——

"And when one is old and weak? So it is all a physical phenomenon?"

When she had slowly and relentlessly flung this retort at him, for want of a better object for her scorn, she turned her head away; her eyes fell upon Hamoud who, sitting on his heels near her chair, was watching her face by the light of the talc-sided lanterns that dangled from the tent-fly. But Parr, not utterly crushed, proffered faintly that he knew he could not argue with the likes of her, being without education, having taken life as it came, mostly obeying orders.

"Like Hamoud," she commented. "Hamoud has taken life as it came, obeying the orders of fate. What is your word for resignation, Hamoud? The word that brought you across the ocean into Mr. Verne's service, and then back across the ocean into this place?"

"*Mektoub*," he vouchsafed, after lowering his eyes so that she should not see the flames in them. "And why not, since none can hope to escape his destiny? We—this whole *safari*—are here in the palm of God's hand. None knows what God has prepared for us; yet every footprint that we make has been marked before our feet."

"Then our will is nothing?"

"Ah, if our will is victorious, it is the will of God."

As she made no response, and since the hour called *Isheh* was approaching, he rose and departed to pray.

"Will!" she thought. "No; there is nothing else. Will is the Thing-in-Itself."

The tent-curtain fell behind her. She heard Parr's voice call out the command for silence. His words were taken up by the *askaris* on guard. The camp-noises ceased. One heard only the scolding of the monkeys, the drumming of partridges and the far-off roar of a lion that had eaten his fill. The earth seemed to tremble slightly from that distant sound.

She lay on her bed, under the muslin mosquito-net through which was strained the pearly gleam of a lantern. Once more it was all an illusion which must be allowed to endure till reality could be gained. For Lilla, the only reality was comprised at this moment into one more meeting with him, in the sight of his living face, in the sound of his voice pronouncing words of forgiveness, of love, perhaps even of remorse. Should she reach him too late for that—find this longing also part of the illusion? The prophecy of Anna Zanidov had gained a still greater power from those deep forests, those sudden apparitions in vaporous clearings of men armed with gleaming spears, and now from the greenish infiltration of the moonlight.

Another lion roared in the depths of the night.

"Why should one fear even these strange forms of death? What has my life been that I should find it precious? What does anything matter except one hour with him? I really ask only a moment. No; all that I fear is death before I find him, before I've won from him a last kiss of understanding and pardon. Will! That shall be my strength and my immunity all the way!"

At last she dozed, to dream that Hamoud had confronted a lion just as the beast was about to pounce upon Madame Zanidov, who, wearing the dress of oxidized silver barbarically painted, crouched in a moonlit clearing. "No, Hamoud; let him have her!" Hamoud, with a smile, stood aside. Then she saw Lawrence approaching, his face and body wrapped in a white cloth. "Too late!" he uttered, and was unveiling his face when she sat up in bed with a scream.

Instantly the curtain let in a flash of moonlight. Hamoud stood at the bedside, his hand on the hilt of his dagger. From behind entered the voices of the guards calling out to one another. Then a murmur of other voices broke like a wave.

"There is nothing here," Hamoud said gently, when he had looked round the tent. As she made no reply, he was about to withdraw; but, kneeling down instead, he raised the weighted hem of the mosquito-net to take her hand and press it to his brow.

"Sleep always without fear. Till Hamoud is dead, no harm shall come to you."

"And dreams?" she moaned, letting her hand go limp in his frozen grasp. "Oh, Hamoud—and dreams?"

In the pearly light, beneath the cloudy net, in the air that was fragrant with the odors of soap and cologne, her upturned countenance and swelling throat gave forth a gleam as if of flesh transfigured by love instead of grief. He felt himself falling through space into a bottomless anguish. He clutched at the thought, "Yet who knows His designs?" and hung in that void alive, his secret still locked in his breast, the delicious pain of her daily condescension still assured to him.

"Ah, if you were of my faith, you would have heard that life is all a dream, that there is no reality except paradise and hell."

He rose, and stole away from paradise to hell.

IN THE dawn, Parr hobbled down the line of yawning porters, checking the reapportionment of burdens. The *machilla*-men, still nibbling at chunks of cold porridge, approached with the hammock swinging from their shoulders.

The *safari* resumed its march.

Its course was northwest, through jungles of bamboo, round the rims of marshes, past forests filmed with the blue and yellow of convolvulus. The mountains remained apparently as far away as ever, now indistinct behind the heat-mist of the lowlands, now disappearing beyond the rain-storms that swept across the plateaus like the robes of colossal gods.

The *safari* passed leopard-traps, graves decked with broken pottery and little banners of rags, then, circling fields of maize, entered a village. The huts stood in a ring inside a rude stockade. The village headman advanced, bending forward from the waist and scraping first one foot and then the other. He made obeisance before the *machilla*, in which men of his own kind bore up a delicate, pale prodigy, an incredible creature from another eon or planet.

He was a wizened old man with shreds of white wool on his chin. His eyeballs were tinctured with yellow. His right shoulder was a mass of long-healed scars from the claws and teeth of some beast. Behind him, against a solid wall of his people, young girls with shaved heads, awestricken, held gourds of beer as pink as coral and as thick as gruel.

The village headman revealed the news of the wilds, which had been transmitted from tribe to tribe by native travelers or by the far-carrying beat of wooden gongs. A *safari*, passing to the north, had penetrated the land of the Mambava. In that *safari* were two white men and many *askaris*. They had now journeyed through the forests of the people of Muene-Motapa. They were in the granite gorges of the waterfalls.

He pointed toward where the floating mountains rose in a peak that was lightly silvered with snow.

Parr, on the Muscat donkey, looking more haggard than ever in the sunshine, demanded, "Is it the white man who is called the *Bwana Bangana?*"

That was the name that had accompanied the news.

For a while the *machilla* was followed by a throng of young women attired in cowrie shells and tiny beaded aprons; then they vanished into the bush, with an effect of supple forms of earth sinking back into the earth. The *safari* marched faster than before, toward the exalted masses that trembled behind the heat.

They emerged upon rolling plains remotely dotted with herds of zebras and antelope. In the blinding sky they saw kites, buzzards and crows rising from the carcasses that had been left half devoured by noctambulant beasts of prey. At nightfall the lightning flashed above the mountains in yellow sheets or rosy zigzags. Thunder rolled out across the plain in majestic detonations.

Lilla, watching the storm from the doorway of her tent, told herself that he, too, must hear these sounds, that she had come near enough to share with him at any rate this sensation—unless her dread had already been realized and he had sunk into a sleep from which even such noises could not wake him.

Hamoud appeared at her side. He quoted from "the uncreated book." "'He showeth you the lightning, a source of awe and hope.'"

Her heart swelled; she turned to that fervent, handsome face beneath the turban a look of peculiar tenderness like a sword-thrust, and responded in liquid tones,

"What should I have done without you?"

LAWRENCE TECK was not in the gorges of the waterfalls.

While marching in through the lowlands he had been seized with a fever that he had failed to shake off on the plateaus. Every day he had grown a little worse, indeed, till finally the choice had seemed to lie between resignation of his work and serious illness. Turning back toward the coast, he had now regained the forests of the Mambava, and here, in his second night's camp, he had suffered a collapse.

He lay abed in his tent. On the waterproof floor-cloth squatted a Mambava warrior, a messenger from King Muene-Motapa.

"Give the word, *Bangana.* Give the word, Brother of the King. We will carry you to the king's town on a litter as soft as the clouds. The wizards shall work their charms to make you well. The Dances of the Moon are about to begin—it is the time of answered prayers. Your medicines have failed; now try ours. One word, *Bangana!* Gladden the heart of the king!"

The messenger's almost Semitic visage,

upturned in the lamplight, was smeared with ambassadorial signs in yellow paint. On his head he wore a bonnet of marabout feathers that floated like a tiara of gossamer; his arms and legs were armored with copper bangles. In his voice there throbbed a tenderness and pathos as if he were making vocal the very essence of the king's desire.

Lawrence Teck returned: "Say this to Muene-Motapa: The medicine that might cure me is far beyond the sea. I thought I might do without it; but see what the lack of it has brought me to. A little chill, a headache—the strong man rejoicing in the world shakes his shoulders and they are gone. But death in one of its multitude of forms stands at the door of the heart that has ceased to take pleasure in life. There is no medicine in this land to cure this sickness."

The messenger groaned, and said compassionately: "It is sad to see the great deserted by their gods. Yet our gods remain." He pressed his palms on the floor-sheet and leaned forward, his filmy headdress drifting over his glittering eyes. "Surely, *Bangana,* now is the time to renounce the old, to embrace the true—to cast the spear of scorn and come in behind our shields till you are strong again. We will make you forget. Give yourself up but once to our ancient mysteries. Have you forgotten the Dances of the Moon?"

THERE rose before Lawrence Teck a vision of an inferno deep in these forests, red from great fires that devoured the moonlight. The inferno was peopled by thousands of beings too dreadful, surely, in their appearance and actions, to be human—beings that danced in regiments with foaming lips, that howled out their frenzy amid the roar of drums, that fell right and left, convulsed, insane, cataleptic, while the witch-doctors, impassive behind their masks, emerged through the smoke of the fires with bloody hands. It was the reign of nature in its densest stronghold; it was that which hovers like an echo over the suave, ordered landscape of civilization; it was the seductive horror that invades the modern brain in dreams or in some moment of utter bitterness and despair.

For a moment he still leaned forward, peering into those glittering dark eyes, though what he saw was something beyond that face—the destruction of all the toil of fifty thousand years, the suicide of a soul. With a shudder, he lay back upon the bed.

"Return to the king."

For five minutes the messenger sat motionless; but Lawrence Teck did not speak again. Rising at last, in a fluff of his marabout plumes, he armed himself with his spear and his oval shield covered with a heraldic design.

"The king will weep," he said. "And the little sisters of the king, and all those who loved you, O dead man!"

He raised the curtain and stalked away.

A white man in a fleece-lined coat, who had been waiting in the open for the messenger to depart, entered the tent and sat down beside the bed.

He was Cornelius Rysbroek.

"Shall you try to march to-morrow?"

Lawrence Teck did not reply. There was no strength in him even to move his hand after that gesture with which he had put from him, though half lost in fever, the ultimate temptation. Cornelius Rysbroek, believing that he saw here defeat instead of victory, smiled.

In his eyes appeared, perfected, the light that had made them exceptional for years, a flash from that psychical lake of fire and brimstone in which his heart had so long been burning up. For the tables were turned at last; the weak one, the inferior, had become the stronger, the better. A thousands wounds seemed to heal themselves in him as he contemplated the prostration of the enemy whom he had hated, just from premonition, even before his appearance. There was true madness in that look, arising from the long privation, the interminable jealousy, the consequent monomania of revenge. "He will die," he reflected, gloating with half-shut eyes, his face, that had once been puerile, now dignified by triumph. "He will never leave this forest," he sang to himself, curling up his mouse-colored mustaches as if at a mirror before sallying out to some pleasure in which there was no sting. But suddenly he remembered that this prostrate rival was still his conqueror, had won what he had not been able to win, would recall, no doubt, in his last moment of consciousness, that love in all its details.

Out of the silent night the spirit of

Africa crept into the dim tent, completing his madness.

To one of the little fires came softly Lawrence Teck's tent-boy, a turbaned Persian, saffron-hued, with the hooked nose of a parrot and the mouth of a cruel woman. He sat down close beside a Swahili gun-bearer, who was frying a mess of white ants.

"Our *bwana* has fallen sleep," he uttered in a voice that would have been inaudible to white men. "The other *bwana* is sitting by the bed." He waited till the ants were cooked to a turn, then murmured, in a tone like Æolian harp-strings caressed by the faintest zephyr, "If our *bwana* does not die of the fever, the other *bwana* will kill him."

The brown Swahili, his pan half raised, turned his face, which seemed to have been smashed flat, and gave the speaker a slow, fierce look of inquiry. The Persian breathed:

"With our *bwana's* own pistol. As if he had killed himself. I peeped through the curtain. The pistol was hanging from the tent-pole. When he looked at it, and then at our *bwana*, I read everything in his mind. But if this also is the will of God, it will not happen until some hour when the camp is still—when we are all asleep."

THE *safari* that was seeking him marched and camped, marched and camped, marched and camped.

Every afternoon the northeastern monsoon wafted in its sticky moisture, releasing in the jungles the nauseating sweetness of incredible flowers. Smoky-brown flies were seen on the necks of the sheep. The beasts began to sicken and die. The porters ate fresh meat.

But the porters no longer sang. The Wasena who bore the hammock muttered to one another dolefully as they shuffled along. All knew by this time that they were not headed for Fort Pero d'Anhaya. Avoiding that last outpost of civilization, they were approaching the country of the Mambava.

The *askaris* alone, the lean, khaki-clad [illegible] remained indifferent to this at- [illegible] of disquiet that was more debil- [illegible] o the porters than the fever-laden [illegible] or these fierce, restless men from the northern deserts were of a breed that found its true contentment in danger and violence. They were cheered, perhaps, by the possibility of bloodshed, sustained by the automatism resulting from their faith, and, despite their disdain of women, inspired by their admiration of this frail personage who was always urging more speed toward the fabulous regions of peril.

As for her, she no longer saw anything except that deep-green zone which quivered behind the heat.

"I shall find him not in the gorges but in those forests."

For the scene of Anna Zanidov's prophecy was laid in a forest.

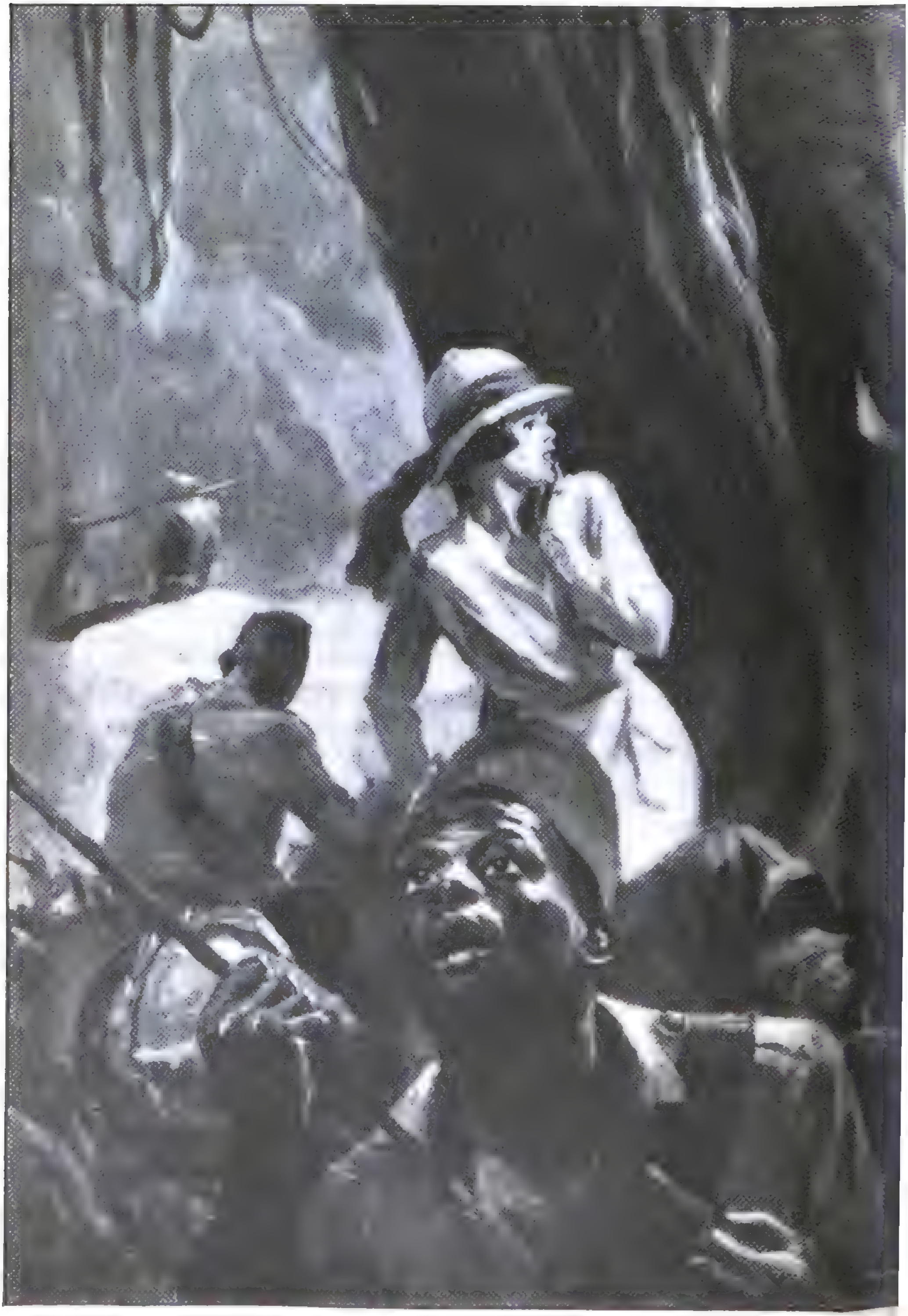
She lay in the *machilla* like a tight-drawn bow. Her skin, now ashen, now bright from a touch of fever, stretched over a visage of apparently new contours; round her cheek-bones and jaws were suggestions of previously unsuspected strength. Her tender lips had assumed an almost cruel aspect; her sunken eyes, growing ever larger in her diminishing face, were harder than gems. She was the personification of will.

And Parr, sagging, shivering, softly groaning on the back of the Muscat donkey, and Hamoud, ever pacing beside her, and the *askaris* with their rifle-barrels glinting against their fezzes, and the porters and the camp-boys were only the instrument that her will had welded together. They were wraiths obediently advancing her dream of one fleeting moment of triumph over fate. They were nothing, since she had summoned them out of the void of this world by an imperious cry. They were everything; for without them her dream would fade.

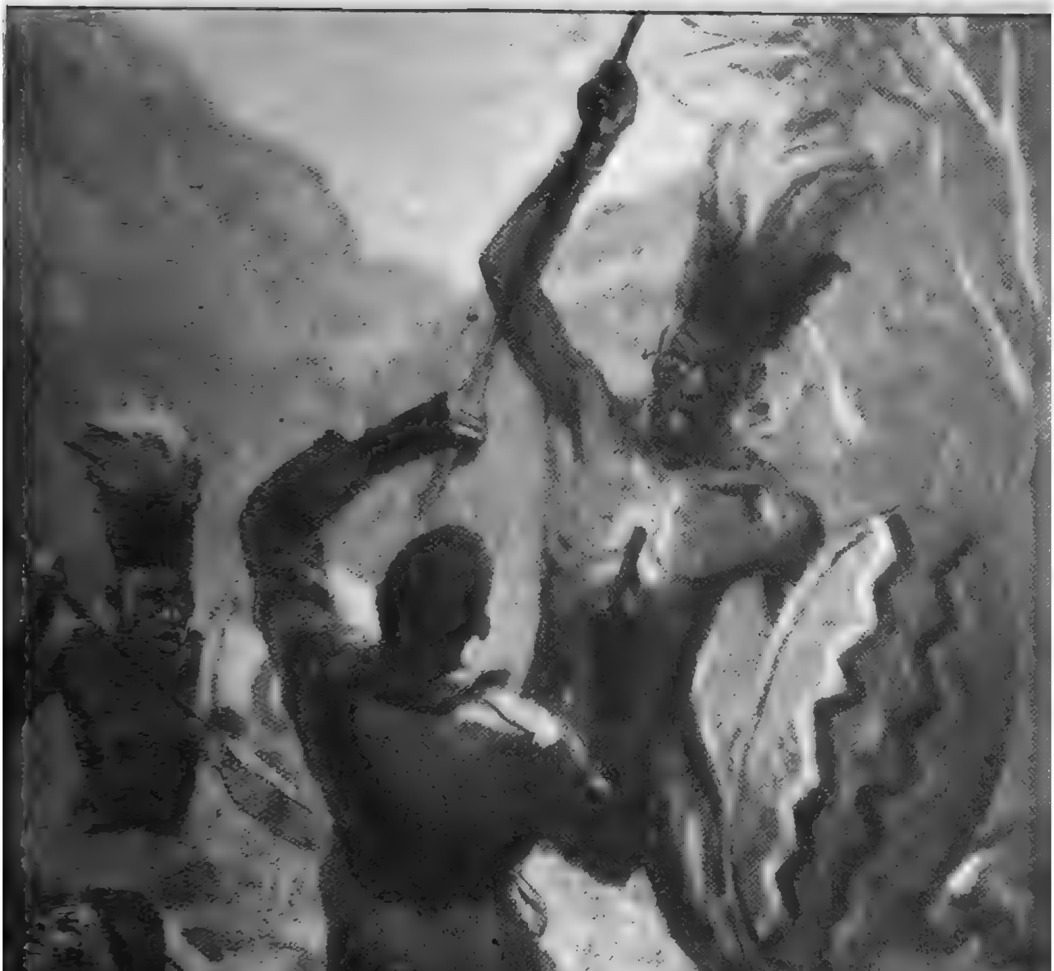
Sometimes the green zone of the uplands was lost in a blur, not of heat but of fever. Sharp pains stabbed her temples, and, when the dream became distinct again, she saw black men walking like giants, their heads in the white-hot sky. But just as she had conquered fear, so, by a supreme resolution, she conquered her vertigo, the burning of her emaciated limbs, the quaking of her body which a moment before had been bathed in moisture. At sunset she descended from the *machilla* to give Hamoud a look of astonishment, while replying,

"No; I am well."

Yet she cast a look of dread at the rising tent, thinking of the hours of sleeplessness, of appalling thoughts on the border line between nightmares and flashes of fever.



Then, without warning, came the charge. Lilla became aware of an incred
Another followed, crouching. She



apparition—a sort of naked harlequin, magnified by a towering head-dress.
paralyzed before that inexorable advance.

Now and then, as she escaped shivering from the hot bath, she lost hold of her new strength.

"If you knew!" she whimpered.

The lost, safe life rose before her. She saw against the green tent walls the painting by Bronzino, the jeweled perspective of Fifth Avenue at night, Fanny Brassfield's necklace sparkling in the blaze of the opera-house. The music of waltzes mingled with the strains of David's tone-poem, and she smelled at the same time the tan-bark of the horse-show, the pastilles at Brantome's, and the flowers surrounding the marble warrior and the marble nymph. She was seized with panic on realizing the remoteness of security.

"Where am I? Africa! But why?"

She stood motionless, aghast at her inability to remember why she was here. Then her roving stare caught from the mirror of her dressing-case the reflection of her slim side, on which she perceived a red mark like a spear-wound.

The stigma had returned!

Hamoud's voice came to her from beyond the curtain, "There is going to be a *shauri*, a talk with these porters of yours."

"Ah, my God! What is it now?"

"Rebellion."

She wrapped herself in her robe and cowered on the bed.

HALF an hour passed. Hamoud's voice was heard again,

"Madam, all is ready."

She emerged victorious once more, her face stony, her lips compressed, her eyes as cold as ice.

On each side of her tent a clump of *askaris* stood leaning on their rifles. Over against her chair the porters were aligned in a great semicircle, tribe by tribe. The intervening flames of a camp-fire shone richly on the massed bronze bodies and the brutish faces that had turned, for once, inexpressive. As Lilla sat down in her chair, a low murmur passed through their ranks and lost itself in the gilded fronds of palm trees that hung stiffly, like the scenery of a theatre, above this spectacle.

Amid the shrilling of crickets a Wasena, the leader of the *machilla*-bearers, spoke first. He was a thin mulatto with filed teeth; the sores on his shoulders were smeared with an ointment made of charcoal and oil. His voice rose explosively, in a sort of childish defiance, persisted for a long while, then suddenly died away. One heard from the depths of the jungle the tittering of a hyena.

An *askari* spat to the left contemptuously.

The leader of the porters from Tete sprang forward with a cry of exasperation. For this occasion he had bound round his waist the pelt of one of the slaughtered sheep, and had made a head-dress of draggled turaco feathers. He waved his sinewy arms, crouched, postured, tossed back his head. His oration was less coherent than the Wasena's, but more dramatic.

"The first moon since the rains! The season when the Mambava hold their great dances! We will not enter the country of the Mambava while they dance to the moon!"

A hoarse outcry rose toward the multitude of stars: "We will not enter the country of the Mambava when they dance to the moon!"

The *askaris*, their fezzes cocked jauntily, impatiently shuffled their sandals of giraffe hide, and hitched up their belts, in which were thrust broad-bladed Somali knives.

"They are rabbits," the *askaris* affirmed. "Even this lady shames them. They are less than women." They turned their fierce eyes toward Lilla, calling out to her, "Here we stand, *Yâ Bibi!*" There was a savage insinuation in that cry.

In order to respond, Parr sat down in a chair, the immemorial symbol of authority. He spoke in Swahili. After each sentence he paused, so that his words might be translated by the headmen of the porters into their tribal dialects. His voice rose faintly, almost ineffectually contending against the sounds of the insects. He looked very small and ghastly in the firelight; he was sick to his bones, feeling just as he had felt before the blackwater fever. The great semicircle of hostile eyes perceived all his weakness. In the opinion of his antagonists, his face bore the seal of death. This representative of the white-skinned [illegible] race was revealed as weaker than the [illegible] trace of the white men's insuperabl [illegible] was to be discerned in his feeble countenance. Why listen any more?

Their leaders no longer troubled to translate his words.

He went on, however, with the last of his strength, holding fast to the thought of paying his debt in full.

"In that land," he declared, "none would dare to hurt the friends of Muene-Motapa's friend. They should return, telling how they had passed unharmed, even honored, through the country of the Mambava." He promised them double pay. While groping for some further argument, he seemed to be sinking in upon himself. His face drooped forward.

From the horde of porters came scattered shouts: "Enough! The *shauri* is over. In the morning we return."

"What do they say, Hamoud?"

"They say that in the morning they will return to the coast."

She sat stunned.

The orator from Tete moved with a kind of spasmodic dancing-gait toward Parr. Never thus had the white men's genius lain prostrate before him. He was the symbol of a race abruptly exalted from inferiority to dominance. There came over him a frenzy of pride and malice; it was the realization of the dreams that burn the brains of all the dark people of the earth.

"Do you hear?" he howled, and brandished his fists as though about to strike that lowered head.

An *askari* glided forward, reversing his rifle; there was a cracking sound as the gun-butt struck the orator from Tete in the middle of the forehead. With a drowsy look, the smitten man sank down as gently as if falling into a mound of feathers, and deliberately composed himself in sleep, his brown face against the brown earth.

Lilla was standing, staring from the prostrate body to the mass of porters, whose eyes were fixed upon the victim, with one look of mournful awakening. Then they saw her whom they had forgotten, or, in their transport, considered negligible. But when they had read her face, it was they who were frightened.

"You! You! To stop me!"

And a homicidal gesture completed her appearance of fury.

'lahi!" the *askaris* called out to one "She has given the order!"

spread out to right and left with a of their rifle-locks; they drove the porters together, close to the fire. A soft moan arose from the huddled crowd. They had seen the whips of hippopotamus hide, long and flexible, translucent in the firelight like streams of amber.

As the lash described a flourish above the first outstretched back, she turned away to her tent. Hamoud was before her, raising the curtain. He said,

"They will speak no more about the coast when we are through with them."

At dawn he came to tell her that Parr had the blackwater fever.

The sick man was unconscious when they sent him off in the *machilla* toward Fort Pero d'Anhaya, with three of the *askaris* and fifteen of the porters. They soon disappeared into a jungle of spear-grass, above which the sunrise was spreading its bands of smoky gold and rose. The chosen porters forgot their lacerated bodies; a song floated back from them to those who must still press onward.

"I have killed him, Hamoud!"

"Who knows? It is true that he is old and has had this fever before. But we do not need him. Maybe he has fulfilled his destiny. And we have not."

The *safari* marched on. She rode the Muscat donkey, which was dying from the bites of tsetse flies.

NEXT morning she marched afoot in the blaze of the sun. Trailing thorns pierced her ankles; the stipa shrubs showered her with little barbs, and from another bush was detached an invisible pollen that penetrated her clothing and burned her skin. At the noon halt they made a hammock of tent-cloth, in which she was carried all afternoon by four porters. At nightfall they saw, across a valley, the edge of the Mambava forests, the towering tree-trunks banked with huge thickets and bound together by nets of vines.

They camped in the valley, where a stream flowed through a tangle of indigo-plants. The warm bath steamed in her tent; the fresh evening garments were laid out; everything was the same in this canvas ark that proceeded farther and farther into the wilds with its atmosphere of rude luxury intact. When she emerged from the tent in her polo-coat and suède mosquito-boots, the table glistened with its china and glassware.

She sat looking at the black forest.

"He is there!"

Everybody's Magazine, January, 1922

But she was very tired.

Ah, to lie down, grope no longer for her will, drift away into a region where there was no love or remorse, sleep forever! Why should she feel like this with the goal so near at last, unless from a premonition that all her efforts were useless?

Never before had this land and its phenomena appeared so cruel, so perfectly the manifestation of a superhuman force that clothed its malignancy in a primordial splendor. Here, she reflected, was the quintessence of earthly beauty inextricable from the quintessence of horror; here was the source of all that she had trusted elsewhere in countless perfidious disguises and refinements.

Poisonous in some subtle element behind its visible vapors, it corrupted not only the flesh but also the souls that had emerged elsewhere into forms of affection and compassion. Two nights ago, even, she had greeted the crack of the whips with the furious thought: "Strike again!"—and now there stole into her brain, together with the light hallucinations of fever, a hatred of these cringing black men who for a moment had dared to stand before her as antagonists.

Through the buzz of insects there came from the forest, gradually blending over wide distances, a gentle throbbing. The porters lifted their round heads beyond the fires. A wail floated over the camp:

"The drums of the Mambava!"

THE throbbing died away. But soon it began again in the north, then in the south, and swelled to a continuous rumbling.

On the edge of the sky the moon appeared, blood-red, nearly full.

There was a rush of feet, a scuffle in the bushes, and two *askaris* advanced into the firelight, dragging between them a creature that they seemed to have plucked out of some grotesque dream.

He was an albino. His gray skin, because of its lack of pigmentation, was splotched with eczema; his wool was a dirty yellowish white; his features were permanently distorted because of his lifelong efforts to keep the light from paining his pink eyes. The *askaris* threw this monstrosity upon his face before Lilla's chair. He lay moaning, and feebly moving his hands, as if caressing the earth.

Suddenly he sat up on his haunches. His body jumped from the beating of his heart. He fixed on Lilla a look that was the utmost caricature of terror and entreaty.

An *askari* let out a neighing laugh.

"So this is one of the dangerous Mambava!"

But the albino was not one of the Mambava.

He was a man of the Manyazombe, who dwelt in the north—an exile, a solitary wanderer, a lost soul. Who knew what aversion, what indefinable dread his dissimilarity had produced in his own people, what village calamities he had been blamed for, what persecutions he had suffered? For some reason he had fled from his own tribe, to be greeted at the outskirts of alien villages with showers of spears. He had learned to reciprocate the horror of mankind. Then he had dwelt in the jungle, joining the furtive beasts. But still, moved by an obscure, invincible need, he crept in coverts from which he might watch the life of human beings, feasting his eyes on the fire-splashed bodies of men and women, listening to the songs and the laughter, filling his nostrils with the savor of his kind, as a damned spirit might creep back to the warmth of life from a desolate hereafter.

But what did he see now? Was she who sat before him human or divine—one of those who must be placated by strict deeds, by charms or the blood of animals and captives?

"Tell him that he is safe," she said, with a movement of loathing.

Falling forward, he embraced her boots with his hands.

A porter who understood his language was summoned to question him. The albino had just now crept through the country of the Mambava. He had not dared to linger there; for on all the forest trails bands of warriors were moving in toward the rendezvous where, as soon as the moon was full, they would hold the dances. Yet in the midst of those forests he had seen the camp of white men.

"He has seen it!" she cried, leaning forward to devour with her eyes that hideous and precious instrument of fate. "Hamoud, he has seen him! He can guide us there!" And, with a look of tenderness, she murmured: "You will show us the way? Ah, I will give you— I will give you——"

She saw herself pouring gold over the pariah.

He bowed his head till his dirty, yellowish poll nearly touched his gray knees that were covered with calluses. Amid the close-packed, silent audience a smothered phrase rose to the ears of the interpreter. Hamoud, turning away his face, cast forth the words: "Too late!"

For the albino, while creeping round that camp in the Mambava forests, had heard of a strange thing, of the shooting of one of the white men in the night. Those discussing the matter had not known how it had happened, since they had all been asleep. The white man was then dying. By this time, no doubt, he was dead.

She sank back as if she, too, had received a bullet. But after a time, during which that dark throng had not stirred, she rose and entered her tent. There Hamoud found her standing, swaying slightly, with closed eyes. An invisible hand had brushed across her countenance, effacing the last traces of her beauty.

"Do we still go on?" breathed Hamoud.

Without opening her eyes, she returned, in a loud voice,

"He shall not die till I get there."

Hamoud's look of sadness gave place to a look of peace.

At daybreak the *safari* entered the forest.

Two *askaris* went first, guarding the albino. Next, since the forest trail was too narrow for hammock-travel, Lilla came afoot with Hamoud, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling no physical weariness or pain. Behind her, the rest of the *askaris* herded along with the porters.

The huge tree-trunks sprang up toward a firmament of somber green, from which descended dense festoons of vines. Through this twilight flitted birds of brilliant plumage and long-haired monkeys. The place had a morose, nefarious beauty, like the forest in the prophecy of Anna Zanidov.

Now and then a glade appeared, hung with flowers of mustard yellow or diaphanous purple. Then again the tunnel-like trail, the green twilight, the flapping of carmine wings, and a shaft of sunshine piercing the canopy to rest upon the gnawed bones of a forest-deer. Here and there stood clumps of brown reeds, without twigs or buds, as though a band of warriors had buried their spears blade down in the earth before vanishing into the thickets. But one saw no faces except those of the monkeys.

They camped in a glade beside a spring. The drums filled the night with their throbbing, which seemed part of the throbbing in Lilla's feverish head. The *askaris* kept double guard; but at dawn eleven of the porters were missing.

AHEAD of the marching *safari*, in a clearing spotted with large, dirty-white blossoms, six black men sat motionless round the ashes of a camp-fire. They were watchers posted here to see that no strangers entered their land at the season of the dances.

Although they could not take part in those mysteries, they wore the full dance-regalia. They were crowned with towering shakos of black-and-white monkey-hair, fastened under their chins with beaded straps, and bristling with egrets. Their bodies were smeared with indigo and blotched with large disks of white paint. Their faces were painted white, but their noses were smeared with soot. They wore not a scrap of clothing; but round their necks and on their arms and legs they had a wealth of talismans—tiny figures fashioned from clay, from iron, from copper and from stone, in which one might discern the characteristics of Phœnician images debased by thousands of years of savage inspiration. In their painted, plumed, bedizened immobility they appeared inhuman, or perhaps less than human—the personifications of Africa's blind and vivid soul, the full efflorescence of this gloomy, white-splotched clearing.

They raised their heads as a seventh, crowned and painted as they were, stood forth from a curtain of vines. On his left arm he wore a shield covered with black-and-white patterns; above the shield-rim glittered the blades of three spears.

He told of a train of dark-skinned men, guided by one with unexceptionable features, but with yellowish wool and a skin that resembled the belly of a dead fish. These intruders served a personage such as had never been seen. For she—if indeed a woman—was tall, with a face the color of the highest mountain-peaks, and eyes gleaming like strange stones. She walked as if in a trance; but in her trancelike face was a cold grief, or maybe a cold fury, like that of some goddess whose tabus had been broken, and who was marching to vengeance.

They sat awestricken, filled with that dread of the supernatural which possesses the savage who is confronted with anything unheard-of. Besides, the spell of the dances was upon them, remote though they were from that scene; the far-off frenzies that were preparing had begun to trouble their nerves. But at last their leader rose.

"Who is the woman with the cold face who enters our country at the time of the Dances of the Moon?"

All his companions repeated his question in a low singing tone, touching their amulets and raising their whitened visages toward the interlaced branches and vines.

The leader's high, tremulous voice was heard again.

"Is it a woman of flesh and blood, or is it the Lady of the Moon?"

It was the genius of the ancient Phœnicians, the spirit of Ashtoreth, surviving distorted through all these ages in the depths of the jungle, exerting its spell.

But a look of cunning entered his bloodshot eyes, and his flexible mask of white was creased by a smile. He cried out in a new voice,

"If she is the Lady of the Moon, our spears will not hurt her!"

He bounded into the air, stamped his feet, shook his head-dress, and crouched in an attitude of war.

"But if she is flesh and blood, our spears will tell us so!"

All leaped to their feet. Their brandished spears made nimbuses over their heads; and this time their response was like the baying of hounds. Then, one by one, they slipped through the curtain of vines.

TREES, trees, trees! They were colossal, draped in moss and lichen, ferns growing from the crooks of their limbs above the impenetrable thickets of broad-leaved plants from which came the tinkle of rills. Here and there had fallen across the narrow corridor a tree-trunk riddled by ants; as Lilla stepped over it, blue scorpions scuttled away.

Hour after hour there floated before her the fezzes and khaki-covered backs of the two leading *askaris*, trim, narrow, jaunty backs flanking the leprous shoulders of the albino. Now and again Hamoud, a robed figment always beside her, addressed her in an unintelligible language.

"Dying. Dying. Dying."

Too late, perhaps, even for that last embrace of glances, that moment of pardon and love which was all that she had asked. Closed eyes, sealed lips, a simulacrum to mock her will, left behind by the spirit that had gone where she and the *safari* could not follow.

"All the same, I shall not be far behind you. My spirit, when it has shaken off this flesh, will travel faster than yours on the wings of a supreme necessity. I shall find you!"

She stopped short, bewildered by a new hallucination—a flash of silvery light across her face. She saw one of the leading *askaris* kneel down and stretch himself on his face, as if trying to press against the ground a thin shaft that seemed to be lying crosswise under his chest. Then she heard an explosion, and perceived a film of smoke full of horizontal gleams—the blades of flying spears.

She had a fleeting impression of Hamoud, his arm outstretched, his hand spitting fire. Beyond him, the albino vanished in mid-air. The second *askari*, his rifle lowered, was staring in vague surmise at his breast, from which protruded a piece of polished wood. At that moment she found herself surrounded by khaki-clad forms, all moving with catlike grace. The dark faces
the fezzes were changed by the fe
battle; the bared teeth shone out bes
locks of the rifles. These thin, hard
buffeting her about, formed round
rampart from which the blades of stee
answered by blades of flame.

Hamoud rose from the ground at he
drawing his dagger. An *askari* grunte
sat down with a thud. Then she saw
they were in the midst of a glade. A
the bushes flitted the pattern of a shie
clump of egrets, a whitened visage
seemed to lack a nose. The *askaris'*
rose, spouted fire, sank down with a c
rose, crashed again. Silence fell.

The blue veil of smoke rose slowly, a
one piece.

Then, without warning, ca

She became aware of an in
rition—a sort of naked harleq
by a towering head-dress, sailing high
twisting over his shield like a pole-vaulte

over a pole, coming down asprawl in a bed of crimson flowers. Another followed, crouching—or else this was only a swiftly advancing shield, topped by a tuft of egrets. But from one side of the shield darted out a long indigo arm, releasing a spear; an *askari* leaned against Lilla, coughed, and slipped to the ground. The advancing shield doubled up to reveal a warrior who, with a somersault, a rattle of amulets, a blur of broad polka-dots, lay flat, his face blown away.

However, more shields were rushing upon the guns.

The Mambava, shot through and through, feeling death upon them, maintained their momentum long enough to drive their weapons through the khaki jackets, or, at the least, to go down with their teeth buried in the riflemen's necks, as if that draft of blood might reanimate them. The wrestlers sank to earth inextricably mingled, a fist perhaps sticking up above the tangle and slowly relinquishing a broad-bladed Somali knife.

One remained apart, some dozen yards away, shot through the hips, but still dragging himself forward. From his open mouth, yawning black in the whitened face, issued roars like those of a crippled lion, as, with a lion's courage, he still came on, his legs trailing, his body scraping the soil, a spear in one clenched paw.

Lilla stood paralyzed, alone, before that inexorable advance.

For the rampart of *askaris* had become a circle of dead men, expressing with their last gestures a deep desire to be remerged with this rich, dark, ancient earth.

But all at once, as though a bit of blue sky had fallen into the glade, there appeared between Lilla and the crawling warrior a figure of trailing blue robes, bent double, running. It was Hamoud, his turban gone, his cheek smeared with loam, one shoulder of his robe stained a deep violet.

Clapping his sandaled foot upon the spear-blade, he seized the Mambava by his plume of egrets. The painted head was dragged back. The Zanzibar dagger shone thr the ribbons of smoke.

outh twisted in abnormal shapes as ggled to cry out. "Hamoud!" she l at last, raising her arms to the utmost and trying to tear her gaze away from that spectacle. The Arab's pose, as he bent over his enemy, was a frightful burlesque of solicitude. How many times had she not seen him bending thus over David, maybe to smooth his pillow? And now, against the colonnade of gloomy trees, there was something sacrificial in that tableau—the blue robe, the wet dagger, the plumed head pulled back, with glazed eyes fixed on the woman who stood rigid, her arms upstretched, transformed from the giver of life into the giver of death.

She fled, stumbled, stood still in the entrance to the back trail. In that leafy tunnel, as far as the eye could see, was no one, living or dead. The porters, the tent-boys, all were gone in a stampede toward safety. The baggage lay scattered among the fern-beds. Beside a mossy rock lay her dressing-case, smashed open, its mirror, brushes and vials trampled into the mud.

"Ah, my mirror is broken!"

She wandered through the wreckage, uttering peals of laughter.

THE light of the full moon, penetrating the high canopy of leaves, illuminated the contorted vines that hung motionless in mid-air like pythons of silver. Here, miles beyond the place of battle, apart from the trail, in a covert that seemed made for them, the woman and the man sat resting, she on a mound of moss as soft as a pile of velvet cushions, he at her feet. A moonbeam touched her loosened hair and her dress that was torn to tatters. She raised her head as the sound of the drums came to her from far away.

To-night there was a new accent in that throbbing, a wilder cadence, a suggestion of tumult, a hint of the infernal. In her fancy she perceived a multitude of naked, painted figures dancing in the glamour of great fires.

A shudder passed through her from head to foot as she said,

"Now you will confess that we have come into a place where God does not exist."

He cast round her his blood-stained robe.

"Wherever we turn," he answered, "there is the Face of God."

"So you still believe? You could even pray, perhaps?"

By way of response, casting up his dark eyes, he pronounced the *Fatiha*, his low voice mingling with the mutter of the drums: "'In the name of God the Compassionate! Praise belongeth to God, the Lord of the Worlds, the King of the Day of Doom. Thee do we serve, and of thee do we ask aid. Guide us in the straight path, the path of those to whom thou hast been gracious, not of those with whom thou art angered, or of those who stray. Amen.' "

"Delusion!" she moaned.

He returned, with a caressing gentleness: "Yes; surely this present life is only a play, a pastime. This world and all in it are shadows cast upon the screen of eternity. But God is real. Everything may go to destruction, but not the Face of God. Ah," he sighed, "if only the Lord had opened your heart to Islam, had willed that you might feel the Inner Light! No matter what may happen, there is peace." He dreamed sadly for a time, then said, "Fair-seeming to men are women; but God—goodly the home with him!" And he averted his head from her.

Something moved in the bushes. Hamoud raised a rifle from the moss into his lap. Amid the leaves, two balls of green fire appeared and disappeared. It was a leopard that had peeped out at them.

The drum-music swelled through the forest.

"To-morrow they will find us," she reflected.

"Meanwhile we live in this flesh, subject to its beliefs, still able to trust in its seeming powers of delight."

So, after a long hush, he took from his bosom a little glass bottle of square surfaces enameled with gold, uncorked it, and held it out to her. There came to her nostrils the odor of her own perfume, which she had worn in a lost world.

"Clothe yourself in this sweetness," he whispered. "Touch it once more to your temples, your hair, your lips. Let it float about you like a veil that covers a beauty remembered from old dreams. These rags will become cloth of gold on the body of the sultana of sultanas. I shall sit while still alive in those gardens beneath whose shades the rivers flow—those charming abodes that are in the Garden of Eden. This, and not paradise, shall be the great bliss."

She poured the few drops of perfume into her palms and held out her hands.

"Ah, Hamoud——"

"Do not speak," he protested, catching her hands in his. "It is this moment for which I became a servant, did things that you will never know of, and followed you here."

She sat in the blood-stained robe, in the dark forest vibrating from the drums and rustling with stealthy beasts, lost, bereft of beauty and faith, yet aware of one more miracle—realizing that even now, out of her poverty, she could still bestow happiness.

AT DAYBREAK they went on.

With his shoulders bowed under a distended sack and a canvas water-bottle, and with his rifle at trail, he guided her feeble steps along the path. Now and then he besought her to rest. She shook her head.

Bees hummed above them in the festoons of flowers. Purple parrots with scarlet crests went fluttering away. At noon they paused, ate some biscuits, then pressed ahead, she driven by her obsession and he, as he believed, by the purposes of Allah.

Just as a rosy warmth was invading the upper foliage, Hamoud pushed her from him and struck at the ground with his gun-butt. He had stepped upon a puff-adder.

He sat down to examine his ankle, on which four tiny pin-pricks were visible. He looked up with a fixed smile.

There it lay, a little crushed reptile, a trivial fragment of matter, its triangular head flattened out, its scales of pinkish gray, slate, black and lemon-yellow already turning dull. Yet the man, a rational being, with power for good as well as evil, for love as well as hatred, was even now dying from it. But his face expressed the fortitude that was at the same time the blessing and the curse of his religion as he said to her:

"Go. I do not wish you to see me die this death."

She knelt down to peer at those almost imperceptible punctures.

"From that?"

As she spoke, he seized his leg above the knee, to choke back the first excruciating pang. Rocking backward and forward, he began to repeat scattered texts from the Koran:

" 'The recompense of the life to come is better, for those who have believed and feared God—' " With a groan, he let go of his leg and clutched at his abdomen. He gasped, " 'Adorned shall they be with golden bracelets and with pearls, and their raiment shall be of silk—' Go! go! Oh, my star, I do not want you to see me die this death!"

He arched his back, then lay flat, his skin colorless, bedewed with a sudden moisture. "'Praise be to God, who hath allowed release from all this, my Master, the Knowing, the Wise! Into gardens beneath whose shades—' Ah, but you will not be there! You will not be there!"

He was silent, twisting like the serpent whose head he had crushed.

This was not strange to her. It was part of the whole; it completed the pattern. Yet her mind, exalted by horror, seemed to discern in his agony a mysterious folly. Then she recalled another held back from the brink of death. She gathered him into her arms and pressed his cheek to her bosom, as though, in the very stronghold of destruction, she might conquer again.

"Live! Live!"

But his voice was failing when he got out the words: "There is a union more splendid than the union of love—the union of death. If you could die now, instead of to-night or to-morrow! Alas! Farewell! Farewell!"

He lost the power of speech. Drowsiness possessed him. But he could still hear her crying far off: "Live! Live!" And he knew that his head was pillowed on her breast.

Now it seemed to her that she had cheated fate, that it was the other whom she held in her arms. It was the other's still living face upon which she rained these kisses.

"Believe me! Forgive me!"

Hamoud-bin-Said slipped away from her into the past. Round him gathered the scent of the clove trees, the music of Zanzibar, the faces of old loves, whose languorous eyes expanded into the glitter of the sea. Through this glitter, in a dhow gay with banners, he drifted toward remoter days, which had been full of capricious glee and weeping over nothing. At last, both Lilla and his God forgotten, he turned his face on her bosom with the movement of a little child that is tired from an hour of silly play.

NIGHT was falling; it was the time when the beasts of prey begin to stir from their lairs. Sitting beside the semblance of Hamoud, she examined in the last of the twilight the well-worn Koran. She hurled the book from her. It was swallowed by the gloom. "You have won," she thought.

In her progress hither she had cast off, one by one, all her repugnances and terrors, all her proud and luxurious impulses, all her charms. Nothing had remained except a love that expected and desired no physical rewards and a power of will that she had conjured up apparently out of nothing.

Now both will and love lay vanquished.

The drums were not yet beating. Silence filled the forest that should have been alive with little furtive noises. Nature, of which this place was the utmost manifestation, seemed to brood with bated breath.

She began to speak, urgently, seductively.

"When they come, you will wake up and protect me, Hamoud. You love me, and I once read somewhere that love can be stronger than death. But now sleep; get back your strength. I'll keep watch. I'm not afraid; for I have only to reach out my hand to touch you."

She touched the cold forehead, muttered, "How chilly you are!" and threw over the body of the martyr the torn *joho* which she had been wearing round her shoulders. There was long silence. The whole forest sighed softly, as if weary of waiting.

"What did you say about this world, Hamoud? A play of shadows? And above it a permanence that you call the Face of God? What queer things your God must see in this shadow-play of ours!"

She laughed indulgently, then caught her breath. The darkness was filled with an amazing sight.

Before her a great pyramid of bodies rose toward an apex surrounded by flashes of pink lightning—the seething bodies of all humanity and of all the animals and reptiles of the earth, each struggling to extricate itself from the rest, to surmount its neighbors, to wriggle toward the apex. The bare breasts of women, whose handsome ball-gowns were torn and covered with mud, strained to be free from the enwrapping trunks of elephants and the coils of pythons. The torsos of dusky savages and the limbs of white men writhed under the fangs of lions and hyenas, which were transfixed by spears or lacerated by wounds that they had inflicted on one another. The countless faces exposed on that quaking mountain of flesh, male and female, light and dark, fair and hideous, brutish and sensitive, expressed one look of stupid and yet agonized desire—all eyes were turned upward toward the summit wreathed with lightning. There, those who had just gained their goal, lightly touched by the tips of the rose-colored bolts, sank back inanimate, went tumbling down the slope with astonishment frozen on their faces, scattering broadcast from their hands a cascade of treasures—jewels, precious scraps of paper, purses, images of gold and ivory, wreaths of laurel or of lilies, scepters, and objects in which no one could have discovered any meaning or any worth.

But what was the goal toward which this mass of flesh was striving so frantically? Above the apex of the pyramid, amid the sheen of the lightning, was revealed a vast figure, naked and indeterminate, dim and yet seeming of a denser texture than the most abysmal beasts—a figure at the same time human and serpentine, that twisted in attitudes of human anguish, yet appeared, like a maddened serpent, to be stinging itself to death.

The whole vision vanished.

"Hamoud! Hamoud! I am afraid!"

But she could not wake the protector.

"God, then!"

And in one last flash of distracted irony, "If I called God in Arabic?"

She had an idea that the silently brooding forest was smiling in the darkness.

Yes; she felt alone—since even the God of Hamoud could not be aware of this world, in which everything desired by the senses or apprehensible by them was going to destruction.

"But I have cast it off, left it all behind me! All that I was, all that related me to this illusion, is gone. I have emeged from it. Ah, surely you must be able to hear me now!"

As her voice, a thin blade of sound, pierced the silence of the black forest, without a premonitory thud the rumble of the drums began, as though the roused spirit of the jungle were trying to drown out this cry. The drum-music swelled louder and louder in the breathless night, its mingled rhythms combining into a veritable thunder. But once more the thin cry, "Hear me!" rose to contest that demoniacal uproar, was torn from the very soul of the woman purged of all mortal beauty and desire.

When she had remained motionless for a while with upturned face, weariness rolled down upon her like an avalanche.

The moonlight, creeping through the tangles, covered her prostrate body. She was dreaming that Anna Zanidov stood before her in the barbarically painted evening gown. She sat up with a bound. Hands had embraced her feet. A grayish form crouched before her.

The albino had heard her.

SITTING back upon his heels, hugging against his breast a small bow and a handful of arrows, the albino scrutinized the fallen divinity. Yes; by some pass of magic she had been changed into a helpless human being, full of human despair. The poor pariah contemplated her in her abasement from an eminence of pity.

He rose with an uncouth gesture of invitation. He guided her through the mottled labyrinth. Stumbling over the roots, bursting her way through the vines, she pressed after the bent figure, whose very loathsomeness now seemed precious to her.

He had found the lost path. He crept forward more quickly, halted at last and pointed. Ahead there expanded a wide sheen of moonlight, in the midst of which she discerned a man standing like a statue, a fez on his head and a rifle over his arm.

The albino was gone.

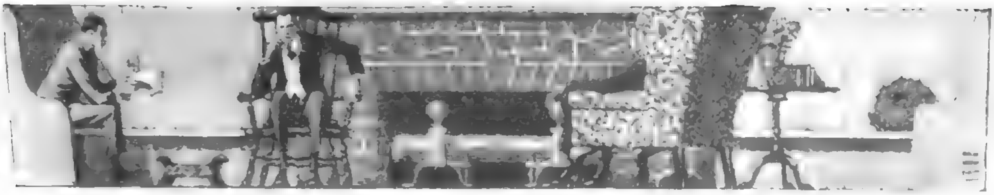
A challenge rang out as she stood forth on the edge of the clearing. Beyond the sentinel she saw red embers and tents, rising black skulls and agitated fezzes. But in the midst of a broad pool of moonlight was spread a tent-cloth through which appeared the outline of a body.

She sank down upon her knees, turned back the tent-cloth from the inscrutable face.

It was the face of Cornelius Rysbroek, who, in the dead of night, beside his sleeping rival, while drawing the pistol from the holster, had been shot in the back.

She perceived, on the curtain of a tent before her, a hand that thrust back the folds, a hand that moved, that lived. Under the tent-fly emerged a man cadaverous from fever, to gaze at another chimera, of tatters and gaunt pallor, in which he found at last a resemblance to the woman he had loved. Though he was sure that this coul reality, life bubbled up in him as nearer. He found somehow the stand firm, to hold her fast when she sagged down in his arms.

THE END



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

IN A letter discussing what various other magazines are publishing, an EVERYBODY'S reader says he is weary of reading the lives of millionaires and their prescriptions for making millions. This criticism leads us to believe that perhaps this reader and others may be interested in reading about a different kind of success—the success of an author, Honoré Willsie, whose books are read by the hundred thousand. Here is how this successful life began:

> As a child, an out-of-door life, with much skating, ice-boating, baseball and tree-climbing, with a baby sister to care for, a dog to train, plenty of dishes to wipe and endless mahogany table-legs to dust. Public school and college. Then marriage to an engineer and the serious attempt to write fiction. With this came the desert country and the Rockies and all that vast open of which fictionists write so profusely and know so little.

THERE is a world of meaning in Mrs. Willsie's reference to "that vast open of which fictionists write so profusely and know so little." Imagination is essential to every sort of success, but imagination is not everything. The man who seeks industrial success must know first-hand his territory and the people with whom he comes in contact. So it is with the fiction-writer. Mrs. Willsie has also something to say about this formula:

> I know of no formula, of no method of teaching which, however liberally applied, will produce a First, there must be talent. That's . Next, one must live, laugh, suffer intimate contact with all sorts of ust live life deeply and with the unceasing attempt to understand it. Then one must write with unending patience, persistence, and with faith that somehow people will be glad to hear the thing as you see it and tell it.

IN THEIR biographies, captains of finance and industry usually lay great stress upon their struggles for recognition. Authors also have the heart-breaking struggle. Even when they have arrived, as far as merit is concerned, they often go for years unrecognized. They unsuccessfully bombard busy editors, who at all times have more manuscripts in front of them than they can read with any chance of seeing clearly the merits or demerits of each. The product of any magazine or publishing house usually represents what one man likes in the way of reading-matter. That man's success depends upon whether a sufficient number of readers like the same kind of reading-matter that he likes. How can every author reach that man—reach him when he is in a receptive mood, when he reads as the non-professional reader does, with the desire to be interested and entertained? How can every author reach him at the proper time when many editors have as many as ten thousand manuscripts a year pass through their offices? Is it any wonder that an editor sometimes gets in the frame of mind attributed to himself by the editor of a funny paper? He said·

> When I start making up my paper, my thoughts are somewhat as follows:
> Page 1 Funny, very funny.
> Page 2 Funny.
> Page 3 This must be funny.
> Page 4 So-so.
> Page 5 Great Scott! I've got to be funny.
> Page 6 Oh, h—ll!

THIS editor confesses that once, years ago, he had doubts about Mrs. Willsie being a writer. Perhaps he read one of her manuscripts when he was befogged, as

Mrs. Willsie establishes a barber shop on the sunny side of a Wyoming ranch-house.

was the comic editor. At any rate, Mrs. Willsie has since demonstrated to this editor, and to hundreds of thousands of readers, that she is one of America's really big novelists. And we think her strongest, her most serious venture in putting together a story based upon life's most vital elements is represented by "Godless Valley," which begins in February. Let Mrs. Willsie tell how she has equipped herself for such work:

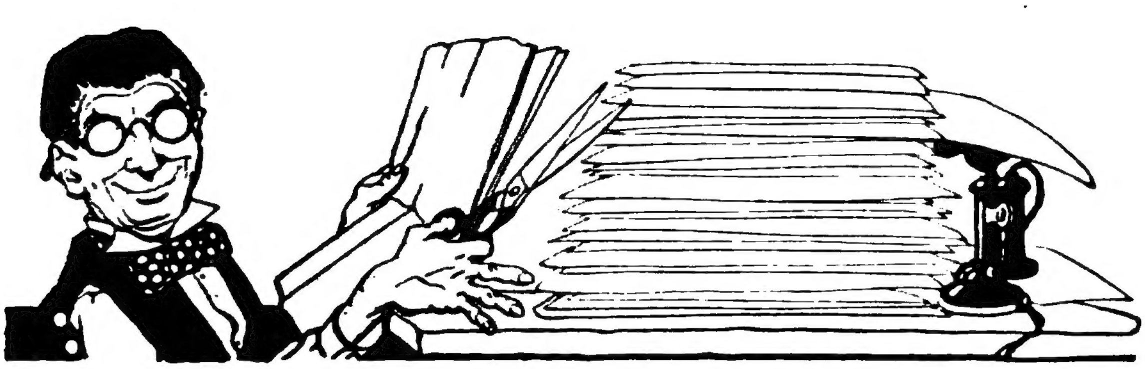
> I have lived in the desert, going months without a roof over my head, enduring heat, sandstorms, and the hardships of the trail along with my husband. I have lived in mining-camps and on dry ranches and in the cattle-country North and South. I have lived among Indians, Mexicans, poor white trash, raw foreigners and old New England Anglo-Saxons. The only job I've held was that of editor of the *Delineator* for nearly five years. I have adopted a little girl and a little boy, whom I love inexpressibly. I like to swim and to ride horseback and to cook, and still loathe dish-washing and dusting.
>
> Now, as to "Godless Valley:" It was written after a good many years of thought about the New Englander and his religion, and a good many years of observation of the New Englander transplanted to the West, where most of his inhibitions were removed. The story is pure fiction; yet it is cow-country as I have known it in many remote localities, where life is lived under extraordinary difficulties in districts of most entrancing beauty.

THE illustrations for "Godless Valley" will be made by Ernest Fuhr, whose work is particularly well known to magazine readers. Of himself he says:

> I don't know why or when I became an artist, but, somehow, ever since I can remember I have always been at it. Born in New York city, received first art-training at National Academy of Design. A number of years on New York *Sun*, *Herald* and *World*, drawing news-pictures, portraits, etc. This was a training which was invaluable to me later as a magazine illustrator. Then a two years' sojourn in France, mostly in Paris, and at later dates more painting, trips to Mexico, Algiers, Tunis, the West Indies, including Cuba, Porto Rico and the Bahama Islands. I prefer working in color, and the stories I like most to illustrate are those with picturesque characters, of adventure and unusual surroundings. I think the function of an illustrator is not to specialize, but to illustrate intelligently any kind of story.

"GODLESS VALLEY" is only one of many interesting features on EVERYBODY'S program for 1922, but it probably is the story that will bite deepest, that will be the most talked about. We would like to hear what you think of the novel as you go along. SEWELL HAGGARD.

Ernest Fuhr goes seeking what to the artist is adventure—new colors, new types.



Prose *and* Worse *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

Urbana, Ill. grocer: "*Try our eggs. They are birds.*"

On Desplaines St., Chicago: "*Bath alone, 10 cents.*" (*Sure; why crowd the tub?*)

Des Moines haberdashery window: "*Closed on account of Jewish Holiday.* Rube Smith."

In hotel in Monico, Wisconsin: "*Special attention paid to guests without baggage.*"

Theatre in Platteville, Wisconsin: "*Woman, in Seven Massive Parts.*"

Chicago florist: "*Funeral-wreaths for all occasions.*" (*Send one for me to the Yanks.*)

Rochester, Minnesota, shoe-shining parlor: "*Ladies watch your skirts. We are not responsible.*"

Restaurant in Yuma, Arizona: "*Spinish and Eggs, Beens, Pumpkin Pie, Stewed Proons.*" (*Well, I* WOULD *take a chance on that last.*)

(*Iowa City Citizen*)

Mrs. F. H. Battey, whose birthday was yesterday, received the following telegram from her daughter, Mrs. J. B. Padgham of Harris, Ia.: "Congratulations. We feel fine, three have smallpox. I'm outside. Louise."

Everybody satisfied.

(*Peoria Journal*)

Would like acquaintance of good business man or a young farmer, like one with car, for pastime and results. Address C. A., care *Star*.

Da—nger is n—ear thee! Beware, b—eware!

(*Denver Times*)

WANTED—A person of sorrow, a quainted with grief, as partner in restaurant. Joe Shires. 'Phone Champa, 2570.

How many "lumps" will you have in your coffee?

(*Decatur Herald*)

FOR SALE—One hundred good barrels. Inquire of L. L. Sober, at Norman's Laundry.

No bid.

(*Minneapolis Journal*)

LOST—A doctor's grip containing piano-tools.

Some patient's chords needed tuning up.

(*Denver Post*)

Caring neither for life, limb or anything, I will consider any proposition you may have, regardless of what it may be; must earn money; do anything; go anywhere; fear nothing; answers confidential. I need money. Will go the limit to get it.

Have you got a little mother-in-law in your home?

(*Dubuque Times-Journal*)

WANTED—A wife, not over 36. Harry M. Vensant.

Oh, those perfect 36's!

(*Mt. Carroll, Ill., Mirror*)

Clarence Fulrath says he froze two of his ears at the cemetery while attending the Verne Wilson funeral Friday.

Luckily the others were not touched.

(*Steger Journal*)

Take your prescriptions to the Steger Pharmacy, where they will be filled with unscrupulous care.

Who'll take the first chance?

(*Kendall County, Ill., News*)

The Torkelson twin brothers were home Sunday visiting their respective parents.

Father; meet mother.

Copyright, 1921, by Gridley Adams

(Beulah, Mich., Record)

The bride was gowned in cream silk—tint and mode befitting her personal charms and natural grace. The groom was dressed in a manly pride that so goodly a heritage had come to him.

Lovely; just lovely.

(Cuba City, Wis., News-Herald)

An auto load of Benton girls consisting of the Hunter sisters, Miss Calvert, Miss Ayer, and another one attended the funeral Tuesday, and put in the rest of the time fishing, etc. They had a jolly fine time.

Don't you just love bier on a fishing-trip?

(North English, Ia., Record)

Harry Hall moved Friday into the Watson house south of the railroad. Darwin Mason into the house vacated by Hall, and Milo Stover into the Mart Hill house vacated by Mason.

Last reports Watson was still going.

(Adv. of Chicago Beach Hotel)

Patrons not wearing bathing-suits will find the café very comfortable.

Considering the lack of rain, aren't the gardens looking wonderful?

(Aurora, Ill., Beacon-News)

B. O'N.—Sometime ago I applied the skin of an [illegible] my face. The boil disappeared, [illegible] which several gray feathers are [illegible] h worried about them, and wish [illegible] e how to remove them.

Don't worry until you begin to cluck.

(Hampton, Ia., Chronicle)

The thieves took everything else he had in the room. Mr. Ferris borrowed a pair of pants from the housemaid while he went out to a store and secured a pair of shoes, socks, etc.

My dear, you should have seen him!

(Sacramento Bee)

M. Devine was painfully burned while bathing his feet in some gasoline for the purpose of curing rheumatism. It seems as though he looked at the gasoline with a lighted candle, causing it to ignite.

"As though" is right.

(London Nation)

Turn back to the magazines of twenty or thirty years ago.

Yes; I've got an appointment with my dentist this afternoon.

(Embargo on Canadian products)

Includes agricultural implements, except for breeding.

Hydraulic rams?

(Peoria Star)

Licensed to marry: Walter E. Bledsoe, 23; Anna L. Stuck, 18.

Two hearts that now bledsoe as one.

(Special Correspondence to The Express)

BURNETT, TEX., Oct. 2—In the football game played Saturday afternoon between Burnett and Marble Falls on the Marble Falls grounds, Burnett defeated Marble Falls, 21 to 7.

MARBLE FALLS, TEX., Oct 2—The Marble Falls football team in their first game of the season here Saturday afternoon defeated Burnett, 18 to 6. (F. L. B.)

Well, they had a game, anyway.

(Philadelphia Bulletin)

SYRACUSE, N. Y., Oct. 10—Protestations of ardent love, combined with hard-luck stories and appeals for financial aid, abound in more than 100 letters written by Chester P. Morrissey, former Syracuse University athletic star, to Mrs. Florence E. Harshberger, widow. She died last March, after being struck by a motor-car, and a will in which he was named as executor and sole legatee. (A. B. D.)

Either one a brutal instrument.

(Dallas Morning News)

I, Jeff Davis, baby son of Dr. W. M. Weal, born June 2, 1861, 18 miles east of Marshall, Harrison County, Texas, now live at 2005 May St., Fort Worth. (MRS. D. D. O.)

Come here, Petty.

(Marquette, Mich., Mining News)

WANTED—3 gentlemen desire rooms in a private family with modern conveniences. (M. S. C.)

As, for instance?

(Paris, Tex., News)

Mr. and Mrs. Dan Friday visited John Green Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. George Gentry visited Tom Friday Sunday.

Rufus Friday was a Paris visitor Saturday.

Sunday-school was largely attended here Sunday. (M. N.)

Texan week-enders.

(Adv. appearing in large city papers)

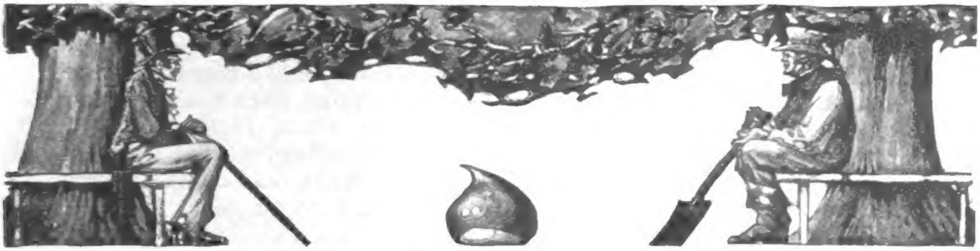
Soak Your Clothes with Grandma. (M. C. S.)

Crowding the Saturday-night tub.

(Chicago Tribune)

To every girl or woman registering [illegible] satisfactory position with the best fir[illegible]. Stenographic Dept., MISS B. CRISP, Mgr. (M. S. C.)

Snappy jobs, eh?



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

JUDGE MELDRIM, ex-president of the American Bar Association, delights in telling a story about a lawyer he remembers as a boy in Savannah.

"It was back in the days when portraits in oil were the fad," says the judge, with that familiar twinkle in his eye, "and Lawyer Giddings, the town's Daniel Webster, had his painted in his favorite and characteristic attitude, standing with one hand in his gray-trousers pocket. His friends and clients all went to see it, and everybody remarked on its wonderful likeness.

"But there finally came one, an old planter, who dissented. ' 'T'ain't like Giddings,' he said dryly. 'No, 't'ain't.'

" ' 'T'ain't like?' cried those present. 'Just show us where 't'ain't like.'

" 'T'ain't like,' repeated the old man, shaking his head. 'Gidding's got his hand in his own pocket. 'Twould be more natural, I reckon, if he had it in somebody else's.' "

MR. AND MRS. SPEEDIT were undecided as to whether they could afford to have a Ford.

"Suppose we cut the Bible for advice," Mr. Speedit suggested.

So his good wife closed her eyes, opened the Good Book at random, drew a finger down the page a bit, stopped, looked and read aloud, " 'And the ungodly shall have chariots of iron.' "

They told the minister about it, and he observed that he had never known the Bible to fit any better; so the Speedits bought the Ford.

AN OLD Vermont farmer, while on a visit to New York, was seized with a violent toothache, and, calling on a dentist, was informed that the tooth must be taken out and that he had better have gas for the operation. He agreed to this, and then started to count his money.

The dentist somewhat testily remarked, "Oh, you need not pay me until I have finished."

"I reckon not," replied the farmer, "but if you're a-goin' to make me unconscious, I'd jes like to see how I stand."

EVERY Saturday Caroline used to go forth on a cleaning job. One day she appeared robed in black.

"What's the matter?" her employer asked.

"Oh, Miss Sophy," she moaned, "my uncle he is dead, and I'se gwine to mourn. I'se gwine to mourn for him four months."

The lady expressed sympathy and added: "I had out that red skirt of mine for you. I thought you might like it; but of course you won't want it now."

"No, Miss Sophy; I'se gwine to mourn four whole months."

Next week brought Caroline as usual.

"I been thinking 'bout that red skirt, Miss Sophy," she said. "It's just the kind of a red skirt I like, and I believe from now on I'll mourn from the waist up."

"MARJORIE," reproved Mrs. Pride sharply, "I should thing that you'd be ashamed to have Miss Marston hear me scold you."

"I am," retorted five-year-old Marjorie. "But you won't keep still."

A BRITISHER, while touring the United States, remarked to a man in the West, "You have an extr'ord'nary country here, you know, very extr'ord'nary—stunnin' women, rippin' big cities, and a bally lot of other things, but you have no aristocracy."

"No what?" asked the Westerner.

"No aristocracy," replied the Britisher.

"Aristocracy? Aristocracy? And what's that?" inquired the mystified native.

"Oh," drawled the son of Albion, "people who never did anything—and whose parents and grandparents never did anything—whose families have always been people of leisure."

"Oh, yes; we have 'em here, but *we* call 'em 'tramps.' "

ALTHOUGH Gene Whitley possessed many admirable qualities, he was somewhat lacking in oratory, to shine in which was his highest ambition. On account of some local activities, he was requested to give a lecture in his native town on "Home Economics." His vocabulary, however, could not do justice to the richness of his mind, and his audience was manifestly disappointed.

The following day he received this note om one of the women who attended the ecture:

DEAR MR. WHITLEY:
What you need is two things: (1) a wife; (2) lessons in elocution.

To which the aspiring orator replied:

DEAR MADAM:
Am in receipt of your note saying that I need two things: (1) a wife; (2) lessons in elocution. Those are only one.

AN OFFICER was showing an old lady over the battle-ship.

"This," said he, pointing to an inscribed plate on the deck, "is where our gallant captain fell."

"No wonder," replied the old lady; "I nearly slipped on it myself."

LADY: I guess you're gettin' a good thing out o' tending the rich Smith boy, ain't ye, doctor?

DOCTOR: Well, yes; I get a pretty good fee. Why?

LADY: Well, I hope you won't forget that my Willie threw the brick that hit 'im.

A MAN went into a depar e and stood hesitating, when a very g us clerk stepped up to him. He said,

"I can't remember what I was to get—whether it was a camisole or a casserole."

The young lady inquired,

"Is it for a live chicken or a dead one?"

THE Norton brothers, two tight-fisted natives of Ohio, brought suit against a neighbor for four hundred and fifty dollars for damages which said neighbor's cattle had done to their crops. They engaged the best lawyer they could procure, and he won the case. A few days later one of the brothers called to ascertain the amount of the attorney's fee.

"Well," answered the lawyer reflectivel "I won't be hard on you. I have know both you boys since you were kids, and knew your dad. I guess four hundre dollars will be satisfactory." The brothe was too profoundly dazed to utter any repl but managed to find the door and get ou After confiding the startling announcemer to brother number two, that worthy e claimed:

"Sufferin' Angelica! I'm darned glad h didn't know granddad, too!"

THE following Rules of the Road we noted by an automobilist in Japan, printe in English for the benefit of foreigners:

1. At the rise of the hand of policeman, st rapidly.
2. Do not pass him by or otherwise d respect him.
3. When a passenger of the foot hove sight, tootle the horn—melodiously first, but if he still obstacles your passag tootle him with vigor, express by t workings of the mouth the warnir "Hi! Hi!"
4. Beware of the wandering horse that shall not take fright as you pass him l Do not explode an exhaust at him; soothingly by.
5. Give space to the festive dog that sh sport in the roadway.
6. Avoid entanglement of dog with y wheel-spokes.
7. Go soothingly in the grease-mud lurks the skid-demon.
8. Press the brake of the foot a round the corner to save coll tie-up.